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THE WORKS
OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE

IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME VIII

LITERARY CRITICISM
III

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PORTRAIT OF ELIZABETH (ARNOLD) POE, MOTHER OF THE POET, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MINIATURE IN THE POSSESSION OF J. H. INGRAM.

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THE WORKS

OF

EDGAR ALLAN POE

NEWLY COLLECTED AND EDITED, WITH A MEMOIR, CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS, AND NOTES, BY EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN AND GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

THE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ALBERT EDWARD STERNER

IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME VIII

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I

THE LITERATI

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THE LITERATI

SOME HONEST OPINIONS AT RANDOM RESPECTING THEIR AUTHORIAL MERITS, WITH OCCASIONAL WORDS OF PERSONALITY

I

OF CRITICISM — PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

IN a criticism on Bryant I was at some pains in pointing out the distinction between the popular "opinion" of the merits of cotemporary authors and that held and expressed of them in private literary society. The former species of "opinion" can be called "opinion" only by courtesy. It is the public's own, just as we consider a book our own when we have bought it. In general, this opinion is adopted from the journals of the day, and I have endeavored to show that the cases are rare indeed in which these journals express any other sentiment about books than such as may be attributed directly or indirectly to the authors of the books. The most "popular," the most "successful" writers among us (for a brief period, at least) are, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, persons of mere address, perseverance, effrontery — in a word, busybodies, toadies, quacks. These people easily succeed in *boring* editors (whose attention is too often entirely engrossed by politics or

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other "business" matter) into the admission of favorable notices written or caused to be written by interested parties — or, at least, into the admission of *some* notice where, under ordinary circumstances, *no* notice would be given at all. In this way ephemeral "reputations" are manufactured, which, for the most part, serve all the purposes designed — that is to say, the putting money into the purse of the quack and the quack's publisher; for there never was a quack who could be brought to comprehend the value of mere fame. Now, men of genius will not resort to these manœuvres, because genius involves in its very essence a scorn of chicanery; and thus for a time the quacks always get the advantage of them, both in respect to pecuniary profit and what *appears* to be public esteem.

There is another point of view, too. Your literary quacks court, in especial, the personal acquaintance of those "connected with the press." Now these latter, even when penning a voluntary, that is to say, an uninstigated notice of the book of an acquaintance, feel as if writing not so much for the eye of the public as for the eye of the acquaintance, and the notice is fashioned accordingly. The bad points of the work are slurred over, and the good ones brought out into the best light — all this through a feeling akin to that which makes it unpleasant to speak ill of one to one's face. In the case of men of genius, editors, as a general rule, have no such delicacy; for the simple reason that, as a general rule, they have no acquaintance with these men of genius, a class proverbial for shunning society.

But the very editors, who hesitate at saying in print an ill word of an author personally known, are usually

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the most frank in speaking about him privately. In literary society, they seem bent upon avenging the wrongs self-inflicted upon their own consciences. Here, accordingly, the quack is treated as he deserves — even a little more harshly than he deserves — by way of striking a balance. True merit, on the same principle, is apt to be slightly overrated; but, upon the whole, there is a close approximation to absolute honesty of opinion; and this honesty is farther secured by the mere trouble to which it puts one, in conversation, to model one's countenance to a falsehood. We place on paper without hesitation a tissue of flatteries, to which in society we could not give utterance, for our lives, without either blushing or laughing outright.

For these reasons there exists a very remarkable discrepancy between the apparent public opinion of any given author's merits and the opinion which is expressed of him orally by those who are best qualified to judge. For example, Mr. Hawthorne, the author of "Twice-Told Tales," is scarcely recognized by the press or by the public, and, when noticed at all, is noticed merely to be damned by faint praise. Now, my own opinion of him is that, although his walk is limited, and he is fairly to be charged with mannerism, treating all subjects in a similar tone of dreamy innuendo, yet in this walk he evinces extraordinary genius, having no rival either in America or elsewhere; and this opinion I have never heard gainsaid by any one literary person in the country. That this opinion, however, is a spoken and not a written one, is referable to the facts, first, that Mr. Hawthorne *is* a poor man, and, second, that he *is not* an ubiquitous quack.

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Again, of Mr. Longfellow, who, although a little quacky *per se*, has, through his social and literary position as a man of property and a professor at Harvard, a whole legion of active quacks at his control — of *him* what is the apparent popular opinion? Of course, that he is a poetical phenomenon, as entirely without fault as is the luxurious paper upon which his poems are invariably borne to the public eye. In private society he is regarded with one voice as a poet of far more than usual ability, a skilful artist, and a well-read man, but as less remarkable in either capacity than as a determined imitator and a dexterous adapter of the ideas of other people. For years I have conversed with no literary person who did not entertain precisely these ideas of Professor Longfellow; and, in fact, on all literary topics, there is in society a seemingly wonderful coincidence of opinion. The author accustomed to seclusion, and mingling for the first time with those who have been associated with him only through their works, is astonished and delighted at finding common to all whom he meets, conclusions which he had blindly fancied were attained by himself alone and in opposition to the judgment of mankind.

In the series of papers which I now propose, my design is, in giving my own unbiassed opinion of the *literati* (male and female) of New York, to give at the same time very closely, if not with absolute accuracy, that of conversational society in literary circles. It must be expected, of course, that, in innumerable particulars, I shall differ from the voice, that is to say, from what appears to be the voice, of the public; but this is a matter of no consequence whatever.

New York literature may be taken as a fair repre-

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sentation of that of the country at large. The city itself is the focus of American letters. Its authors include, perhaps, one-fourth of all in America, and the influence they exert on their brethren, if seemingly silent, is not the less extensive and decisive. As I shall have to speak of many individuals, my limits will not permit me to speak of them otherwise than in brief; but this brevity will be merely consistent with the design, which is that of simple opinion, with little of either argument or detail. With one or two exceptions, I am well acquainted with every author to be introduced; and I shall avail myself of the acquaintance to convey, generally, some idea of the personal appearance of all who, in this regard, would be likely to interest my readers. As any precise order or arrangement seems unnecessary and may be inconvenient, I shall maintain none. It will be understood that, without reference to supposed merit or demerit, each individual is introduced absolutely at random.

GEORGE BUSH

THE REV. GEORGE BUSH is Professor of Hebrew in the University of New York, and has long been distinguished for the extent and variety of his attainments in Oriental literature; indeed, as an Oriental linguist, it is probable that he has no equal among us. He has published a great deal, and his books have always the good fortune to attract attention throughout the civilized world. His "Treatise on the Millennium" is, perhaps, that of his earlier compositions by which he is most extensively as well as most favorably known. Of late days he has created a singular

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commotion in the realm of theology by his "Anastasis, or the Doctrine of the Resurrection: in which it is shown that the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is not sanctioned by Reason or Revelation." This work has been zealously attacked, and as zealously defended by the professor and his friends. There can be no doubt that, up to this period, the Bushites have had the best of the battle. The "Anastasis" is lucidly, succinctly, vigorously, and logically written, and proves, in my opinion, everything that it attempts, provided we admit the imaginary axioms from which it starts; and this is as much as can be well said of any theological disquisition under the sun. It might be hinted, too, in reference as well to Professor Bush as to his opponents, "*que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient.*" A subsequent work on "The Soul," by the author of "Anastasis," has made nearly as much noise as the "Anastasis" itself.

Taylor, who wrote so ingeniously "The Natural History of Enthusiasm," might have derived many a valuable hint from the study of Professor Bush. No man is more ardent in his theories; and these latter are neither few nor commonplace. He is a Mesmerist and a Swedenborgian — has lately been engaged in editing Swedenborg's works, publishing them in numbers. He converses with fervor, and often with eloquence. Very probably he will establish an independent church.

He is one of the most amiable men in the world, universally respected and beloved. His frank, unpretending simplicity of demeanor is especially winning.

In person he is tall, nearly six feet, and spare,

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with large bones. His countenance expresses rather benevolence and profound earnestness than high intelligence. The eyes are piercing; the other features, in general, massive. The forehead, phrenologically, indicates causality and comparison, with deficient ideality — the organization which induces strict logicality from insufficient premises. He walks with a slouching gait and with an air of abstraction. His dress is exceedingly plain. In respect to the arrangement about his study, he has many of the Magliabechian habits. He is, perhaps, fifty-five years of age, and seems to enjoy good health.

GEORGE H. COLTON

MR. COLTON is noted as the author of "Tecumseh," and as the originator and editor of the "American Review," a Whig magazine of the higher (that is to say, of the five-dollar) class. I must not be understood as meaning any disrespect to the work. It is, in my opinion, by far the best of its order in this country, and is supported in the way of contribution by many of the very noblest intellects. Mr. Colton, if in nothing else, has shown himself a man of genius in his successful establishment of the magazine within so brief a period. It is now commencing its second year, and I can say from my own personal knowledge that its circulation exceeds two thousand — it is probably about two thousand five hundred. So marked and immediate a success has never been attained by any of our five-dollar magazines, with the exception of the "Southern Literary Messenger," which, in the course of nineteen months (subsequent to the

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seventh from its commencement) attained a circulation of rather more than five thousand.

I cannot conscientiously call Mr. Colton a good editor, although I think that he will finally be so. He improves wonderfully with experience. His present defects are timidity and a lurking taint of partiality, amounting to positive prejudice (in the vulgar sense) for the literature of the Puritans. I do not think, however, that he is at all aware of such prepossession. His taste is rather unexceptionable than positively good. He has not, perhaps, sufficient fire within himself to appreciate it in others. Nevertheless, he endeavors to do so, and in this endeavor is not inapt to take opinions at second-hand — to adopt, I mean, the opinions of others. He is nervous, and a very trifling difficulty disconcerts him, without getting the better of a sort of dogged perseverance which will make a thoroughly successful man of him in the end. He is (classically) well educated.

As a poet, he has done better things than "Tecumseh," in whose length he has committed a radical and irreparable error sufficient in itself to destroy a far better book. Some portions of it are truly poetical; very many portions belong to a high order of eloquence; it is invariably well versified, and has no glaring defects, but, upon the whole, is insufferably tedious. Some of the author's shorter compositions, published anonymously in his magazine, have afforded indications even of genius.

Mr. Colton is marked in his personal appearance. He is probably not more than thirty, but an air of constant thought (with a pair of spectacles) causes him to seem somewhat older. He is about five feet eight or nine in height, and fairly proportioned — neither

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stout nor thin. His forehead is quite intellectual. His mouth has a peculiar expression difficult to describe. Hair light and generally in disorder. He converses fluently, and, upon the whole, well, but grandiloquently, and with a tone half tragical, half pulpital.

In character he is in the highest degree estimable; a most sincere, high-minded, and altogether honorable man. He is unmarried.

N. P. WILLIS

Whatever may be thought of MR. WILLIS'S talents, there can be no doubt about the fact that, both as an author and as a man, he has made a good deal of noise in the world — at least for an American. His literary life, in especial, has been one continual *émeute;* but then, his literary character is modified or impelled in a very remarkable degree by his personal one. His success (for in point of fame, if of nothing else, he has certainly been successful) is to be attributed, one-third to his mental ability and two-thirds to his physical temperament — the latter goading him into the accomplishment of what the former merely gave him the means of accomplishing.

At a very early age Mr. Willis seems to have arrived at an understanding that, in a republic such as ours, the *mere* man of letters must ever be a cipher, and endeavored, accordingly, to unite the *éclat* of the *littérateur* with that of the man of fashion or of society. He "pushed himself," went much into the world, made friends with the gentler sex, "delivered" poetical addresses, wrote "Scriptural" poems, travelled, sought the intimacy of noted women, and got into quarrels with notorious men. All these things served his pur-

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pose — if, indeed, I am right in supposing that he had any purpose at all. It is quite probable that, as before hinted, he acted only in accordance with his physical temperament; but, be this as it may, his personal greatly advanced, if it did not altogether establish, his literary fame. I have often carefully considered whether, without the *physique* of which I speak, there is that in the absolute *morale* of Mr. Willis which would have earned him reputation as a man of letters; and my conclusion is, that he could not have failed to become noted in *some* degree under almost any circumstances, but that about two-thirds (as above stated) of his appreciation by the public should be attributed to those adventures which grew immediately out of his animal constitution.

He received what is usually regarded as a "good education," that is to say, he graduated at college; but his education, in the path he pursued, was worth to him, on account of his extraordinary *savoir faire*, fully twice as much as would have been its value in any common case. No man's knowledge is more available, no man has exhibited greater tact in the seemingly casual display of his wares. With him, at least, a little learning is no dangerous thing. He possessed at one time, I believe, the average quantum of American collegiate lore — "a little Latin and less Greek," a smattering of physical and metaphysical science, and (I should judge) a *very* little of the mathematics — but all this must be considered as mere *guess* on my part. Mr. Willis speaks French with some fluency, and Italian not quite so well.

Within the ordinary range of belles-lettres authorship, he has evinced much versatility. If called on to designate him by any general literary title, I might

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term him a magazinist; for his compositions have invariably the species of *effect*, with the brevity which the magazine demands. We may view him as a paragraphist, an essayist, or rather "sketcher," a tale-writer, and a poet.

In the first capacity he fails. His points, however good when deliberately wrought, are too *recherchés* to be put hurriedly before the public eye. Mr. Willis has by no means the *readiness* which the editing a newspaper demands. He composes (as did Addison, and as do many of the most brilliant and seemingly *dashing* writers of the present day) with great labor and frequent erasure and interlineation. His manuscripts, in this regard, present a very singular appearance, and indicate the vacillation which is, perhaps, the leading trait of his character. A newspaper, too, in its longer articles — its "leaders" — very frequently demands argumentation, and here Mr. Willis is remarkably out of his element. His exuberant fancy leads him over hedge and ditch — anywhere from the main road; and, besides, he is far too readily self-dispossessed. With time at command, however, his great tact stands him instead of all argumentative power, and enables him to overthrow an antagonist without permitting the latter to see how he is overthrown. A fine example of this "management" is to be found in Mr. Willis's reply to a very inconsiderate attack upon his social standing, made by one of the editors of the New York "Courier and Inquirer." I have always regarded this reply as the highest evidence of its author's ability, as a masterpiece of ingenuity, if not of absolute genius. The skill of the whole lay in this — that, without troubling himself to refute the charges themselves brought against him

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by Mr. Raymond, he put forth his strength in rendering them null, to all intents and purposes, by obliterating, incidentally and without letting his design be perceived, all the impression these charges were calculated to convey. But this reply can be called a newspaper article only on the ground of its having appeared in a newspaper.

As a writer of "sketches," properly so called, Mr. Willis is unequalled. Sketches, especially of society, are his *forte*, and they are so for no other reason than that they afford him the best opportunity of introducing the personal Willis; or, more distinctly, because this species of composition is most susceptible of impression from his personal character. The *dégagé* tone of this kind of writing, too, best admits and encourages that fancy which Mr. Willis possesses in the most extraordinary degree; it is in fancy that he reigns supreme; this, more than any one other quality, and, indeed, more than all his other literary qualities combined, has made him what he is. It is this which gives him the originality, the freshness, the point, the piquancy, which appear to be the immediate, but which are, in fact, the mediate sources of his popularity.[1]

[1] As, by metaphysicians and in ordinary discourse, the word fancy is used with very little determinateness of meaning, I may be pardoned for repeating here what I have elsewhere said on this topic. I shall thus be saved much misapprehension in regard to the term, — one which will necessarily be often employed in the course of this series.

"Fancy," says the author of "Aids to Reflection" (who aided reflection to much better purpose in his "Genevieve"), — "fancy combines — imagination creates." This was intended and has been received as a distinction, but it is a distinction without a difference — without a difference even of degree. The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination, and neither at all. Novel conceptions

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In tales (written with deliberation for the magazines) he has shown greater constructiveness than I should have given him credit for had I not read his compositions of this order — for in this faculty all

are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can imagine nothing which does not really exist; if it could, it would create not only ideally but substantially, as do the thoughts of God. It may be said, "We imagine a griffin, yet a griffin does not exist." Not the griffin, certainly, but its component parts. It is no more than a collation of known limbs, features, qualities. Thus with all which claims to be new, which appears to be a creation of the intellect — all is re-soluble into the old. The wildest effort of the mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

Imagination, fancy, fantasy, and humor have in common the elements combination and novelty. The imagination is the artist of the four. From novel arrangements of old forms which present themselves to it, it selects such only as are harmonious; the result, of course, is *beauty* itself — using the word in its most extended sense and as inclusive of the sublime. The pure imagination chooses, *from either beauty or deformity*, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as a general rule, partaking in character of sublimity or beauty in the ratio of the respective sublimity or beauty of the things combined, which are themselves still to be considered as atomic — that is to say, as previous combinations. But, as often analogously happens in physical chemistry, so not unfrequently does it occur in this chemistry of the intellect, that the admixture of two elements will result in a something that shall have nothing of the quality of one of them — or even nothing of the qualities of either. The range of imagination is thus unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that *beauty* which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test. But, in general, the richness of the matters combined, the facility of discovering combinable novelties worth combining, and *the absolute "chemical combination"* of the completed mass, are the particulars to be regarded in our estimate of imagination. It is this thorough harmony of an imaginative work which so often causes it to be undervalued by the undiscriminating, through the character of *obviousness* which is superinduced. We are apt to find our-

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his other works indicate a singular deficiency. The chief charm even of these tales, however, is still referable to *fancy*.

As a poet, Mr. Willis is not entitled, I think, to so high a rank as he may justly claim through his prose; and this for the reason that, although fancy is not inconsistent with any of the demands of those classes of prose composition which he has attempted, and, indeed, is a vital element of most of them, still it is

selves asking *why it is that these combinations have never been imagined before?*

Now, when this question *does not occur*, when the harmony of the combination is comparatively neglected, and when, in addition to the element of novelty, there is introduced the sub-element of *unexpectedness* — when, for example, matters are brought into combination which not only have never been combined, but whose combination strikes us as a *difficulty happily overcome*, the result then appertains to the fancy, and is, to the majority of mankind, more grateful than the purely harmonious one — although, absolutely, it is less beautiful (or grand) for the reason that *it is* less harmonious.

Carrying its errors into excess — for, however enticing, they *are* errors still, or nature lies — fancy is at length found infringing upon the province of fantasy. The votaries of this latter delight not only in novelty and unexpectedness of combination, but in the *avoidance* of proportion. The result is, therefore, abnormal, and, to a healthy mind, affords less of pleasure through its novelty than of pain through its incoherence. When, proceeding a step farther, however, fancy seeks not merely disproportionate but incongruous or antagonistic elements, the effect is rendered more pleasurable by its greater positiveness, there is a merry effort of truth to shake from her that which is no property of hers, and we laugh outright in recognizing humor.

The four faculties in question seem to me all of their class; but when either fancy or humor is expressed to gain an end, is pointed at a purpose — whenever either becomes objective in place of subjective, then it becomes, also, pure wit or sarcasm, just as the purpose is benevolent or malevolent.

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at war (as will be understood from what I have said in the foot-note) with that purity and perfection of *beauty* which are the soul of the poem proper. I wish to be understood as saying this generally of our author's poems. In some instances, seeming to feel the truth of my proposition (that fancy should have no place in the loftier poesy), he has denied it a place, as in "Melanie," and his Scriptural pieces; but, unfortunately, he has been unable to supply the void with the true imagination, and these poems consequently are deficient in vigor, in stamen. The Scriptural pieces are quite "correct," as the French have it, and are much admired by a certain set of readers, who judge of a poem, not by its effect on themselves, but by the effect which they imagine it *might* have upon themselves were they not unhappily soulless, and by the effect which they take it for granted it *does* have upon others. It cannot be denied, however, that these pieces are, in general, tame, or indebted for what force they possess to the Scriptural passages of which they are merely paraphrastic. I quote what, in my own opinion, and in that of nearly all my friends, is really the truest poem ever written by Mr. Willis.

"The shadows lay along Broadway,
'T was near the twilight-tide —
And slowly there a lady fair
Was walking in her pride.
Alone walked she; but, viewlessly,
Walked spirits at her side.

"Peace charmed the street beneath her feet,
And Honor charmed the air;
And all astir looked kind on her,
And called her good as fair;
For all God ever gave to her
She kept with chary care.

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"She kept with care her beauties rare
From lovers warm and true, —
For her heart was cold to all but gold,
And the rich came not to woo, —
But honored well are charms to sell
If priests the selling do.

"Now walking there was one more fair —
A slight girl, lily-pale;
And she had unseen company
To make the spirit quail:
'Twixt Want and Scorn she walked forlorn,
And nothing could avail.

"No mercy now can clear her brow
For this world's peace to pray;
For, as love's wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman's heart gave way! —
But the sin forgiven by Christ in Heaven
By man is cursed alway."

There is about this little poem (evidently written in haste and through impulse) a true imagination. Its grace, dignity, and pathos are impressive, and there is more in it of earnestness, of soul, than in anything I have seen from the pen of its author. His compositions, in general, have a taint of worldliness, of insincerity. The identical rhyme in the last stanza is very noticeable, and the whole *finale* is feeble. It would be improved by making the last two lines precede the first two of the stanza.

In classifying Mr. Willis's writings, I did not think it worth while to speak of him as a dramatist, because, although he has written plays, what they have of merit is altogether in their character of poem. Of his "Bianca Visconti" I have little to say; — it deserved to fail, and did, although it abounded in eloquent passages. "Tortesa" abounded in the same, but had a

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great many dramatic *points* well calculated to tell with a conventional audience. Its characters, with the exception of Tomaso, a drunken buffoon, had no character at all, and the plot was a tissue of absurdities, inconsequences, and inconsistencies; yet I cannot help thinking it, upon the whole, the best play ever written by an American.

Mr. Willis has made very few attempts at criticism, and those few (chiefly newspaper articles) have not impressed me with a high idea of his analytic abilities, although with a very high idea of his taste and discrimination.

His style proper may be called extravagant, bizarre, pointed, epigrammatic without being antithetical (this is very rarely the case), but, through all its whimsicalities, graceful, classic, and accurate. He is very seldom to be caught tripping in the minor morals. His English is correct; his most outrageous imagery is, at all events, unmixed.

Mr. Willis's career has naturally made him enemies among the envious host of dunces whom he has outstripped in the race for fame; and these his personal manner (a little tinctured with reserve, brusquerie, or even haughtiness) is by no means adapted to conciliate. He has innumerable warm friends, however, and is himself a warm friend. He is impulsive, generous, bold, impetuous, vacillating, irregularly energetic — apt to be hurried into error, but incapable of deliberate wrong.

He is yet young, and, without being handsome, in the ordinary sense, is a remarkably well-looking man. In height he is, perhaps, five feet eleven, and justly proportioned. His figure is put in the best light by the ease and assured grace of his carriage. His

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whole person and personal demeanor bear about them the traces of "good society." His face is somewhat too full, or rather heavy, in its lower portions. Neither his nose nor his forehead can be defended; the latter would puzzle phrenology. His eyes are a dull bluish gray, and small. His hair is of a rich brown, curling naturally and luxuriantly. His mouth is well cut; the teeth fine; the expression of the smile intellectual and winning. He converses little, *well* rather than fluently, and in a subdued tone. The portrait of him published about three years ago in "Graham's Magazine," conveys by no means so true an idea of the man as does the sketch (by Lawrence) inserted as frontispiece to a late collection of his poems.

WILLIAM M. GILLESPIE

Mr. William M. Gillespie aided Mr. Park Benjamin, I believe, some years ago, in the editorial conduct of the "New World," and has been otherwise connected with the periodical press of New York. He is more favorably known, however, as the author of a neat volume entitled "Rome as Seen by a New Yorker," — a good title to a good book. The endeavor to convey Rome only by those impressions which would naturally be made upon an American gives the work a certain air of originality, — the rarest of all qualities in descriptions of the Eternal City. The style is pure and sparkling; although occasionally flippant and dilettantesque. The love of remark is much in the usual way — *selon les règles* — never very exceptionable, and never very profound.

Mr. Gillespie is not unaccomplished, converses

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readily on many topics, has some knowledge of Italian, French, and, I believe, of the classical tongues, with such proficiency in the mathematics as has obtained for him a professorship of civil engineering at Union College, Schenectady.

In character he has much general amiability, is warm-hearted, excitable, nervous. His address is somewhat awkward, but "insinuating" from its warmth and vivacity. Speaks continuously and rapidly, with a lisp which, at times, is by no means unpleasing; is fidgety, and never knows how to sit or to stand, or what to do with his hands and feet, or his hat. In the street walks irregularly, mutters to himself, and, in general, appears in a state of profound abstraction.

In person he is about five feet seven inches high, neither stout nor thin, angularly proportioned; eyes large and dark hazel, hair dark and curling, an ill-formed nose, fine teeth, and a smile of peculiar sweetness; nothing remarkable about the forehead. The general expression of the countenance when in repose is rather unprepossessing, but animation very much alters its character. He is probably thirty years of age — unmarried.

CHARLES F. BRIGGS

MR. BRIGGS is better known as "Harry Franco," a *nom de plume* assumed since the publication, in the "Knickerbocker Magazine," of his series of papers called "Adventures of Harry Franco." He also wrote for the "Knickerbocker" some articles entitled "The Haunted Merchant," which have been printed since as a novel, and from time to time subsequently has

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been a contributor to that journal. The two productions just mentioned have some merit. They depend for their effect upon the relation in a straightforward manner, just as one would talk, of the most commonplace events, — a kind of writing which, to ordinary, and especially to indolent intellects, has a very observable charm. To cultivated or to active minds it is in an equal degree distasteful, even when claiming the merit of originality. Mr. Briggs's manner, however, is an obvious imitation of Smollett; and, as usual with all imitation, produces an unfavorable impression upon those conversant with the original. It is a common failing, also, with imitators, to out-Herod Herod in aping the peculiarities of the model; and, too frequently, the faults are more pertinaciously exaggerated than the merits. Thus the author of "Harry Franco" carries the simplicity of Smollett sometimes to insipidity, and his picturesque low-life is made to degenerate into sheer vulgarity.

If Mr. Briggs has a *forte*, it is a Flemish fidelity that omits nothing, whether agreeable or disagreeable; but I cannot call this *forte* a virtue. He has also some humor, but nothing of an original character. Occasionally he has written good things. A magazine article, called "Dobbs and his Cantelope," was quite easy and clever in its way; but the way is necessarily a small one. And I ought not to pass over without some allusion to it his satirical novel of "Tom Pepper." As a novel, it really has not the slightest pretensions. To a genuine artist in literature, he is as Plumbe to Sully. Plumbe's daguerreotypes have more fidelity than any portrait ever put on canvas, and so Briggs's sketches of E. A. Duyckinck ("Tibbings") and the author of "Puffer Hopkins" ("Ferocious") are as life-

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like as any portraits in words that have ever been drawn. But the subjects are little and mean, pretending and vulgar. Mr. Briggs would not succeed in delineating a gentleman. And some letters of his in Hiram Fuller's paper — perhaps for the reason that they run through a desert of stupidity — some letters of his, I say, under the apt signature of "Ferdinand Mendoza Pinto," are decidedly clever as examples of caricature; absurd, of course, but sharply absurd, so that, with a knowledge of their design, one could hardly avoid occasional laughter. I once thought Mr. Briggs could cause laughter only by his efforts at a serious kind of writing.

In connection with Mr. John Bisco, he was the originator of the late "Broadway Journal" — my editorial association with that work not having commenced until the sixth or seventh number, although I wrote for it occasionally from the first. Among the principal papers contributed by Mr. Briggs were those discussing the paintings at the preceding exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in New York. I may be permitted to say that there was scarcely a point in his whole series of criticisms on this subject at which I did not radically disagree with him. Whatever taste he has in art is, like his taste in letters, Flemish. There is a portrait painter for whom he has an unlimited admiration. The unfortunate gentleman is Mr. Page.

Mr. Briggs is about five feet six inches in height, somewhat slightly framed, with a sharp, thin face, narrow forehead, nose sufficiently prominent, mouth rather pleasant in expression, eyes not so good, gray and small, although occasionally brilliant. In dress he is apt to affect the artist, felicitating himself especially

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upon his personal acquaintance with artists and his general connoisseurship. He walks with a quick, nervous step. His address is quite good, frank, and insinuating. His conversation has now and then the merit of humor, and more frequently of a smartness, allied to wit, but he has a perfect mania for contradiction, and it is sometimes impossible to utter an uninterrupted sentence in his hearing. He has much warmth of feeling, and is not a person to be disliked, although very apt to irritate and annoy. Two of his most marked characteristics are vacillation of purpose and a passion for being mysterious. He has, apparently, travelled; has some knowledge of French; has been engaged in a variety of employments; and now, I believe, occupies a lawyer's office in Nassau Street. He is from Cape Cod or Nantucket, is married, and is the centre of a little circle of rather intellectual people, of which the Kirklands, Lowell, and some other notabilities are honorary members. He goes little into general society, and seems about forty years of age.

WILLIAM KIRKLAND

MR. WILLIAM KIRKLAND — husband of the author of "A New Home" — has written much for the magazines, but has made no collection of his works. A series of "Letters from Abroad" have been among his most popular compositions. He was in Europe for some time, and is well acquainted with the French language and literature, as also with the German. He aided Dr. Turner in the late translation of Von Raumer's "America," published by the Langleys. One of his best magazine papers appeared in the "Columbian," — a review of the "London Foreign Quarterly"

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for April, 1844. The arrogance, ignorance, and self-glorification of the "Quarterly," with its gross injustice towards everything un-British, were severely and palpably exposed, and its narrow malignity shown to be especially *mal-à-propos* in a journal exclusively devoted to foreign concerns, and therefore presumably imbued with something of a cosmopolitan spirit. An article on "English and American Monthlies" in "Godey's Magazine" and one entitled "Our English Visitors," in the "Columbian," have also been extensively read and admired. A valuable essay on "The Tyranny of Public Opinion in the United States" (published in the "Columbian" for December, 1845) demonstrates the truth of Jefferson's assertion that in this country, which has set the world an example of physical liberty, the inquisition of popular sentiment overrules in practice the freedom asserted in theory by the laws. "The West, the Paradise of the Poor," and "The United States Census for 1830," the former in the "Democratic Review," the latter in "Hunt's Merchants' Magazine," with sundry essays in the daily papers, complete the list of Mr. Kirkland's works. It will be seen that he has written little, but that little is entitled to respect for its simplicity, and the evidence which it affords of scholarship and diligent research. Whatever Mr. Kirkland does is done carefully. He is occasionally very caustic, but seldom without cause. His style is vigorous, precise, and, notwithstanding his foreign acquirements, free from idiomatic peculiarities.

Mr. Kirkland is beloved by all who know him; in character mild, unassuming, benevolent, yet not without becoming energy at times; in person rather short and slight; features indistinctive; converses well and zealously, although his hearing is defective.

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JOHN W. FRANCIS

DOCTOR FRANCIS, although by no means a *littérateur*, cannot well be omitted in an account of the New York *literati*. In his capacity of physician and medical lecturer, he is far too well known to need comment. He was the pupil, friend, and partner of Hossack — the pupil of Abernethy — connected in some manner with everything that has been well said or done medicinally in America. As a medical essayist, he has always commanded the highest respect and attention. Among the points he has made at various times, I may mention his Anatomy of Drunkenness, his views of the Asiatic Cholera, his analysis of the Avon waters of the State, his establishment of the comparative immunity of the constitution from a second attack of yellow fever, and his pathological propositions on the changes wrought in the system by specific poisons through their assimilation, — propositions remarkably sustained and enforced by recent discoveries of Liebig.

In unprofessional letters Doctor Francis has also accomplished much, although necessarily in a discursive manner. His biography of Chancellor Livingston, his Horticultural Discourse, his Discourse at the opening of the new hall of the New York Lyceum of Natural History, are (each in its way) models of fine writing, just sufficiently toned down by an indomitable common sense. I had nearly forgotten to mention his admirable sketch of the personal associations of Bishop Berkeley, of Newport.

Doctor Francis is one of the old spirits of the New York Historical Society. His philanthropy, his active, untiring beneficence, will forever render his name a

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household word among the truly Christian of heart. His professional services and his purse are always at the command of the needy; few of our wealthiest men have ever contributed to the relief of distress so bountifully — none certainly with greater readiness or with warmer sympathy.

His person and manner are richly peculiar. He is short and stout, probably five feet eight in height, limbs of great muscularity and strength, the whole frame indicating prodigious vitality and energy — the latter is, in fact, the leading trait in his character. His head is large, massive, the features in keeping; complexion dark florid; eyes piercingly bright; mouth exceedingly mobile and expressive; hair gray, and worn in matted locks about the neck and shoulders, eyebrows to correspond, jagged and ponderous. His age is about fifty-eight. His general appearance is such as to arrest attention.

His address is the most genial that can be conceived, its *bonhomie* irresistible. He speaks in a loud, clear, hearty tone, dogmatically, with his head thrown back and his chest out; never waits for an introduction to anybody; slaps a perfect stranger on the back and calls him "Doctor" or "Learned Theban;" pats every lady on the head, and (if she be pretty and *petite*) designates her by some such title as "My Pocket Edition of the Lives of the Saints." His conversation proper is a sort of Roman punch, made up of tragedy, comedy, and the broadest of all possible farce. He has a natural, felicitous flow of talk, always overswelling its boundaries and sweeping everything before it right and left. He is very earnest, intense, emphatic; thumps the table with his fist; shocks the nerves of the ladies. His *forte*, after all, is humor,

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the richest conceivable — a compound of Swift, Rabelais, and the clown in the pantomime. He is married.

II

ANNA CORA MOWATT

MRS. MOWATT is in some respects a remarkable woman, and has undoubtedly wrought a deeper impression upon *the public* than any one of her sex in America.

She became first known through her recitations. To these she drew large and discriminating audiences in Boston, New York, and elsewhere to the north and east. Her subjects were much in the usual way of these exhibitions, including comic as well as serious pieces, chiefly in verse. In her selections she evinced no *very* refined taste, but was probably influenced by the elocutionary rather than by the literary value of her programmes. She read well; her voice was melodious; her youth and general appearance excited interest, but, upon the whole, she produced no great effect, and the enterprise may be termed unsuccessful, although the press, as is its wont, spoke in the most sonorous tone of her success.

It was during these recitations that her name, prefixed to occasional tales, sketches, and brief poems in the magazines, first attracted an attention that, but for the recitations, it might not have attracted.

Her sketches and tales may be said to be cleverly written. They are lively, easy, conventional, scintillating with a species of sarcastic wit, which might be termed good were it in any respect original. In point of style — that is to say, of mere English — they are

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very respectable. One of the best of her prose papers is entitled "Ennui and its Antidote," published in the "Columbian Magazine" for June, 1845. The subject, however, is an exceedingly hackneyed one.

In looking carefully over her poems, I find no one entitled to commendation as a whole; in very few of them do I observe even noticeable passages, and I confess that I am surprised and disappointed at this result of my inquiry; nor can I make up my mind that there is not much latent poetical power in Mrs. Mowatt. From some lines addressed to Isabel M—— I copy the opening stanza as the most favorable specimen which I have seen of her verse.

"Forever vanished from thy cheek
Is life's unfolding rose;
Forever quenched the flashing smile
That conscious beauty knows!
Thine orbs are lustrous with a light
Which ne'er illumes the eye
Till heaven is bursting on the sight
And earth is fleeting by."

In this there is much force, and the idea in the concluding quatrain is so well put as to have the air of originality. Indeed, I am not sure that the thought of the last two lines is not original; at all events, it is exceedingly natural and impressive. I say "natural," because, in any imagined ascent from the orb we inhabit, when heaven should "burst on the sight" — in other words, when the attraction of the planet should be superseded by that of another sphere, then instantly would the "earth" have the appearance of "fleeting by." The versification, also, is much better here than is usual with the poetess. In general she is rough, through excess of harsh consonants. The whole poem

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is of higher merit than any which I can find with her name attached; but there is little of the spirit of poesy in anything she writes. She evinces more feeling than ideality.

Her first decided success was with her comedy, "Fashion," although much of this success itself is referable to the interest felt in her as a beautiful woman and an authoress.

The play is not without merit. It may be commended especially for its simplicity of plot. What the Spanish playwrights mean by dramas of intrigue, are the worst acting dramas in the world; the intellect of an audience can never safely be fatigued by complexity. The necessity for verbose explanation, however, on the part of Trueman, at the close of the play, is in this regard a serious defect. A *dénouement* should in all cases be taken up with action — with nothing else. Whatever cannot be explained by such action should be communicated at the opening of the story.

In the plot, however estimable for simplicity, there is of course not a particle of originality of invention. Had it, indeed, been designed as a burlesque upon the arrant conventionality of stage incidents in general, it might have been received as a palpable hit. There is not an event, a character, a jest, which is not a well-understood thing, a matter of course, a stage property time out of mind. The general tone is adopted from "The School for Scandal," to which, indeed, the whole composition bears just such an affinity as the shell of a locust to the locust that tenants it — as the spectrum of a Congreve rocket to the Congreve rocket itself. In the management of her imitation, nevertheless, Mrs. Mowatt has, I think, evinced a sense of theatrical effect or point which may

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lead her, at no very distant day, to compose an exceedingly taking, although it can never much aid her in composing a very meritorious drama. "Fashion," in a word, owes what it had of success to its being the work of a lovely woman who had already excited interest, and to the very commonplaceness or spirit of conventionality which rendered it readily comprehensible and appreciable by the public proper. It was much indebted, too, to the carpets, the ottomans, the chandeliers, and the conservatories, which gained so decided a popularity for that despicable mass of inanity, the "London Assurance" of Boucicault.

Since "Fashion," Mrs. Mowatt has published one or two brief novels in pamphlet form, but they have no particular merit, although they afford glimpses (I cannot help thinking) of a genius as yet unrevealed, except in her capacity of actress.

In this capacity, if she be but true to herself, she will assuredly win a very enviable distinction. She has done well, wonderfully well, both in tragedy and comedy; but if she knew her own strength, she would confine herself nearly altogether to the depicting (in letters not less than on the stage) the more gentle sentiments and the most profound passions. Her sympathy with the latter is evidently intense. In the utterance of the truly generous, of the really noble, of the unaffectedly passionate, we see her bosom heave, her cheek grow pale, her limbs tremble, her lip quiver, and nature's own tear rush impetuously to the eye. It is this freshness of the heart which will provide for her the greenest laurels. It is this enthusiasm, this well of deep feeling, which should be made to prove for her an inexhaustible source of fame. As an actress, it is to her a mine of wealth worth all the dawdling

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instruction in the world. Mrs. Mowatt, on her first appearance as Pauline, was quite as able to give lessons in stage routine to any actor or actress in America, as was any actor or actress to give lessons to her. *Now*, at least, she should throw all "support" to the winds, trust proudly to her own sense of art, her own rich and natural elocution, her beauty, which is unusual, her grace, which is queenly, and be assured that these qualities, as she *now* possesses them, are all sufficient to render her a great actress, when considered simply as the means by which the end of natural acting is to be attained, as the mere instruments by which she may effectively and unimpededly lay bare to the audience the movements of her own passionate heart.

Indeed, the great charm of her manner is its naturalness. She looks, speaks, and moves, with a well-controlled impulsiveness, as different as can be conceived from the customary rant and cant, the hack conventionality of the stage. Her voice is rich and voluminous, and although by no means powerful, is so well managed as to seem so. Her utterance is singularly distinct, its sole blemish being an occasional Anglicism of accent, adopted probably from her instructor, Mr. Crisp. Her reading could scarcely be improved. Her action is distinguished by an ease and self-possession which would do credit to a veteran. Her step is the perfection of grace. Often have I watched her for hours with the closest scrutiny, yet never for an instant did I observe her in an attitude of the least awkwardness or even constraint, while many of her seemingly impulsive gestures spoke in loud terms of the woman of genius, of the poet imbued with the profoundest sentiment of the beautiful in motion.

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Her figure is slight, even fragile. Her face is a remarkably fine one, and of that precise character best adapted to the stage. The forehead is, perhaps, the least prepossessing feature, although it is by no means an unintellectual one. Hair light auburn, in rich profusion, and always arranged with exquisite taste. The eyes are gray, brilliant, and expressive, without being full. The nose is well formed, with the Roman curve, and indicative of energy. This quality is also shown in the somewhat excessive prominence of the chin. The mouth is large, with brilliant and even teeth and flexible lips, capable of the most instantaneous and effective variations of expression. A more radiantly beautiful smile it is quite impossible to conceive.

GEORGE B. CHEEVER

THE REVEREND GEORGE B. CHEEVER created at one time something of an excitement by the publication of a little *brochure* entitled "Deacon Giles's Distillery." He is much better known, however, as the editor of "The Commonplace Book of American Poetry," a work which has at least the merit of not belying its title, and *is* exceedingly commonplace. I am ashamed to say that for several years this compilation afforded to Europeans the only material from which it was possible to form an estimate of the poetical ability of Americans. The selections appear to me exceedingly injudicious, and have all a marked leaning to the didactic. Dr. Cheever is not without a certain sort of negative ability as critic, but works of this character should be undertaken by poets or not at all. The verses which I have seen attributed to *him* are undeniably *médiocres*.

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His principal publications, in addition to those mentioned above, are "God's Hand in America," "Wanderings of a Pilgrim under the Shadow of Mont Blanc," "Wanderings of a Pilgrim under the Shadow of Jungfrau," and, lately, a "Defence of Capital Punishment." This "Defence" is at many points well reasoned, and as a clear *résumé* of all that has been already said on its own side of the question may be considered as commendable. Its premises, however (as well as those of all reasoners *pro* or *con* on this vexed topic), are admitted only very partially by the world at large, — a fact of which the author affects to be ignorant. Neither does he make the slightest attempt at bringing forward one novel argument. Any man of ordinary invention might have adduced and maintained a dozen.

The two series of "Wanderings" are, perhaps, the best works of their writer. They are what is called "eloquent;" a little too much in that way, perhaps, but nevertheless entertaining.

Dr. Cheever is rather small in stature, and his countenance is vivacious; in other respects, there is nothing very observable about his personal appearance. He has been recently married.

CHARLES ANTHON

Doctor Charles Anthon is the well-known Jay Professor of the Greek and Latin languages in Columbia College, New York, and Rector of the Grammar School. If not absolutely the best, he is at least generally considered the best classicist in America. In England, and in Europe at large, his scholastic acquirements are more sincerely respected than those of any of our countrymen. His additions to Lemprière are

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there justly regarded as evincing a nice perception of method, and accurate as well as extensive erudition, but his "Classical Dictionary" has superseded the work of the Frenchman altogether. Most of Professor Anthon's publications have been adopted as text-books at Oxford and Cambridge, — an honor to be properly understood only by those acquainted with the many high requisites for attaining it. As a commentator (if not exactly as a critic) he may rank with any of his day, and has evinced powers very unusual in men who devote their lives to classical lore. His accuracy is very remarkable; in this particular he is always to be relied upon. The trait manifests itself even in his manuscript, which is a model of neatness and symmetry, exceeding in these respects anything of the kind with which I am acquainted. It is somewhat *too* neat, perhaps, and *too* regular, as well as diminutive, to be called beautiful; it might be mistaken at any time, however, for very elaborate copperplate engraving.

But his chirography, although fully in keeping, so far as precision is concerned, with his mental character, is, in its entire freedom from flourish or superfluity, as much *out* of keeping with his verbal style. In his notes to the Classics he is singularly Ciceronian — if, indeed, not positively Johnsonese.

An attempt was made not long ago to prepossess the public against his "Classical Dictionary," the most important of his works, by getting up a hue and cry of plagiarism — in the case of all similar books the most preposterous accusation in the world, although, from its very preposterousness, one not easily rebutted. Obviously, the design in any such compilation is, in the first place, to make a useful school-book or book

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of reference, and the scholar who should be weak enough to neglect this indispensable point for the mere purpose of winning credit with a few bookish men for originality, would deserve to be dubbed, by the public at least, a dunce. There are very few points of classical scholarship which are not the common property of "the learned" throughout the world, and in composing any book of reference recourse is unscrupulously and even necessarily had in all cases to similar books which have preceded. In availing themselves of these latter, however, it is the practice of quacks to paraphrase page after page, rearranging the order of paragraphs, making a slight alteration in point of fact here and there, but preserving the spirit of the whole, its information, erudition, etc., etc., while everything is so completely *re-written* as to leave no room for a direct charge of plagiarism; and this is considered and lauded as originality. Now, he who, in availing himself of the labors of his predecessors (and it is clear that all scholars must avail themselves of such labors) — he who shall copy verbatim the passages to be desired, without attempt at palming off their spirit as original with himself, is certainly no plagiarist, even if he fail to make *direct* acknowledgment of indebtedness — is unquestionably *less* of the plagiarist than the disingenuous and contemptible quack who wriggles himself, as above explained, into a reputation for originality, a reputation quite out of place in a case of this kind, the public, of course, never caring a straw whether he be original or not. These attacks upon the New York professor are to be attributed to a clique of pedants in and about Boston, gentlemen envious of his success, and whose own compilations are noticeable only for the singular patience

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and ingenuity with which their dovetailing chicanery is concealed from the public eye.

Doctor Anthon is, perhaps, forty-eight years of age; about five feet eight inches in height; rather stout; fair complexion; hair light and inclined to curl; forehead remarkably broad and high; eye gray, clear, and penetrating; mouth well-formed, with excellent teeth, the lips having great flexibility and consequent power of expression; the smile particularly pleasing. His address in general is bold, frank, cordial, full of *bonhomie*. His whole air is *distingué*, in the best understanding of the term — that is to say, he would impress any one at first sight with the idea of his being no ordinary man. He has qualities, indeed, which would have insured him eminent success in almost any pursuit; and there are times in which his friends are half disposed to regret his exclusive devotion to classical literature. He was one of the originators of the late "New York Review," his associates in the conduct and proprietorship being Doctor F. L. Hawks and Professor R. C. Henry. By far the most valuable papers, however, were those of Doctor Anthon.

RALPH HOYT

THE REVEREND RALPH HOYT is known chiefly — at least to the world of letters — by "The Chaunt of Life and other Poems, with Sketches and Essays." The publication of this work, however, was never completed, only a portion of the poems having appeared, and none of the essays or sketches. It is hoped that we shall yet have these latter.

Of the poems issued, one, entitled "Old," had so many peculiar excellences that I copied the whole of

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it, although quite long, in the "Broadway Journal." It will remind every reader of Durand's fine picture, "An Old Man's Recollections," although between poem and painting there is no more than a very admissible similarity.

I quote a stanza from "Old" (the opening one) by way of bringing the piece to the remembrance of any who may have forgotten it.

"By the wayside, on a mossy stone,
Sat a hoary pilgrim sadly musing;
Oft I marked him sitting there alone,
All the landscape like a page perusing;
Poor, unknown,
By the wayside on a mossy stone."

The quaintness aimed at here is, so far as a single stanza is concerned, to be defended as a legitimate effect, conferring high pleasure on a numerous and cultivated class of minds. Mr. Hoyt, however, in his continuous and uniform repetition of the first line in the last of each stanza of twenty-five, has by much exceeded the proper limits of the quaint and impinged upon the ludicrous. The poem, nevertheless, abounds in lofty merit, and has, in especial, some passages of rich imagination and exquisite pathos. For example—

"Seemed it pitiful he should sit there,
No one sympathizing, no one heeding,
None to love him for his thin gray hair.

"One sweet spirit broke the silent spell—
Ah, to me her name was always Heaven!
She besought him all his grief to tell—
(I was then thirteen and she eleven)
Isabel!
One sweet spirit broke the silent spell.

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"'Angel,' said he sadly, 'I am old:
Earthly hope no longer hath a morrow,
Yet, why I sit here thou shalt be told;'
Then his eye betrayed a pearl of sorrow, —
Down it rolled;
'Angel,' said he sadly, '*I am old!*'

It must be confessed that some portions of "Old" (which is by far the best of the collection) remind us forcibly of the "Old Man" of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

"Pröemus" is the concluding poem of the volume, and itself concludes with an exceedingly vigorous stanza, putting me not a little in mind of Campbell in his best days.

"O'er all the silent sky
A dark and scowling frown —
But darker scowled each eye
When all resolved to die —
When (night of dread renown!)
A thousand stars went down."

Mr. Hoyt is about forty years of age, of the medium height, pale complexion, dark hair and eyes. His countenance expresses sensibility and benevolence. He converses slowly and with perfect deliberation. He is married.

GULIAN C. VERPLANCK

MR. VERPLANCK has acquired reputation — at least his literary reputation — less from what he has done than from what he has given indication of ability to do. His best if not his principal works have been addresses, orations, and contributions to the reviews.

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His scholarship is more than respectable, and his taste and acumen are not to be disputed.

His legal acquirements, it is admitted, are very considerable. When in Congress he was noted as the most industrious man in that assembly, and acted as a walking register or volume of reference, ever at the service of that class of legislators who are too lofty-minded to burden their memories with mere business particulars or matters of fact. Of late years the energy of his character appears to have abated, and many of his friends go so far as to accuse him of indolence.

His family is quite influential — one of the few old Dutch ones retaining their social position.

Mr. Verplanck is short in stature, not more than five feet five inches in height, and compactly or stoutly built. The head is square, massive, and covered with thick, bushy, and grizzly hair; the cheeks are ruddy; lips red and full, indicating a relish for good cheer; nose short and straight; eyebrows much arched; eyes dark blue, with what seems, to a casual glance, a sleepy expression — but they gather light and fire as we examine them.

He must be sixty, but a vigorous constitution gives promise of a ripe and healthful old age. He is active; walks firmly, with a short, quick step. His manner is affable, or (more accurately) sociable. He converses well, although with no great fluency, and has his hobbies of talk; is especially fond of old English literature. Altogether, his person, intellect, tastes, and general peculiarities bear a very striking resemblance to those of the late Nicholas Biddle.

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FREEMAN HUNT

MR. HUNT is the editor and proprietor of the well-known "Merchants' Magazine," one of the most useful of our monthly journals, and decidedly the best "property" of any work of its class. In its establishment he evinced many remarkable traits of character. He was entirely without means, and even much in debt, and otherwise embarrassed, when by one of those intuitive perceptions which belong only to genius, but which are usually attributed to "good luck," the "happy" idea entered his head of getting up a magazine devoted to the interests of the influential class of merchants. The chief happiness of this idea, however (which no doubt had been entertained and discarded by a hundred projectors before Mr. Hunt), consisted in the method by which he proposed to carry it into operation. Neglecting the hackneyed modes of advertising largely, circulating flashy prospectuses, and sending out numerous "agents," who in general merely serve the purpose of boring people into a very temporary support of the work in whose behalf they are employed, he took the whole matter resolutely into his own hands; called personally, in the first place, upon his immediate mercantile friends; explained to them, frankly and succinctly, his object; put the value and necessity of the contemplated publication in the best light — as he well knew how to do — and in this manner obtained to head his subscription list a good many of the most eminent business men in New York. Armed with their names and with recommendatory letters from many of them, he now pushed on to the other chief cities of the Union, and

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thus, in less time than is taken by ordinary men to make a preparatory flourish of trumpets, succeeded in building up for himself a permanent fortune and or the public a journal of immense interest and value. In the whole proceeding he evinced a tact, a knowledge of mankind and a self-dependence, which are the staple of even greater achievements than the establishment of a five-dollar magazine. In the subsequent conduct of the work he gave evidence of equal ability. Having without aid put the magazine upon a satisfactory footing as regards its circulation, he also without aid undertook its editorial and business conduct, from the first germ of the conception to the present moment having kept the whole undertaking within his own hands. His subscribers and regular contributors are now among the most intelligent and influential in America; the journal is regarded as absolute authority in mercantile matters, circulates extensively not only in this country, but in Europe, and even in regions more remote, affording its worthy and enterprising projector a large income, which no one knows better than himself how to put to good use.

The strong points, the marked peculiarities of Mr. Hunt, could not have failed in arresting the attention of all observers of character; and Mr. Willis in especial has made him the subject of repeated comment. I copy what follows from the New York "Mirror":

"Hunt has been glorified in the 'Hong-Kong Gazette,' is regularly complimented by the English mercantile authorities, has every bank in the world for an eager subscriber, every consul, every ship-owner and navigator; is filed away as authority in every library, and thought of in half the countries of the world as early as No. 3 in their

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enumeration of distinguished Americans; yet who seeks to do him honor in the city he does honor to? The 'Merchants' Magazine,' though a prodigy of perseverance and industry, is not an accidental development of Hunt's energies. He has always been singularly sagacious and original in devising new works and good ones. He was the founder of the first 'Ladies' Magazine,'[1] of the first children's periodical; he started the 'American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge,' compiled the best-known collection of American anecdotes, and is an indefatigable writer — the author, among other things, of 'Letters About the Hudson.'

"Hunt was a playfellow of ours in round-jacket days, and we have always looked at him with a reminiscent interest. His luminous, eager eyes, as he goes along the street, keenly bent on his errand, would impress any observer with an idea of his genius and determination, and we think it quite time his earnest head was in the engraver's hand, and his daily passing by a mark for the *digito monstrari*. Few more worthy or more valuable citizens are among us."

Much of Mr. Hunt's character is included in what I have already said and quoted. He is "earnest," "eager," combining in a very singular manner general coolness and occasional excitability. He is a true friend, and the enemy of no man. His heart is full of the warmest sympathies and charities. No one in New York is more universally popular.

He is about five feet eight inches in height, well proportioned; complexion dark-florid; forehead capacious; chin massive and projecting, indicative (according to Lavater and general experience) of that energy which is, in fact, the chief point of his character; hair light brown, very fine, of a weblike texture, worn long

[1] At this point Mr. Willis is, perhaps, in error.

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and floating about the face; eyes of wonderful brilliancy and intensity of expression; the whole countenance beaming with sensibility and intelligence. He is married, and about thirty-eight years of age.

PIERO MARONCELLI

During his twelve years' imprisonment, MARONCELLI composed a number of poetical works, some of which were committed to paper, others lost for the want of it. In this country he has published a volume entitled "Additions to the Memoirs of Silvio Pellico," containing numerous anecdotes of the captivity not recorded in Pellico's work, and an "Essay on the Classic and Romantic Schools," the author proposing to divide them anew and designate them by novel distinctions. There is at least some scholarship and some originality in this essay. It is also brief. Maroncelli regards it as the best of his compositions. It is strongly tinctured with transcendentalism. The volume contains, likewise, some poems, of which the "Psalm of Life," and the "Psalm of the Dawn" have never been translated into English. "Winds of the Wakened Spring," one of the pieces included, has been happily rendered by Mr. Halleck, and is the most favorable specimen that could have been selected. These "Additions" accompanied a Boston version of "My Prisons," by Silvio Pellico.

Maroncelli is now about fifty years old, and bears on his person the marks of long suffering; he has lost a leg; his hair and beard became gray many years ago; just now he is suffering from severe illness, and from this it can scarcely be expected that he will recover.

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In figure he is short and slight. His forehead is rather low, but broad. His eyes are light blue and weak. The nose and mouth are large. His features in general have all the Italian mobility; their expression is animated and full of intelligence. He speaks hurriedly and gesticulates to excess. He is irritable, frank, generous, chivalrous, warmly attached to his friends, and expecting from them equal devotion. His love of country is unbounded, and he is quite enthusiastic in his endeavors to circulate in America the literature of Italy.

LAUGHTON OSBORN

Personally, MR. OSBORN is little known as an author, either to the public or in literary society, but he has made a great many "sensations" anonymously, or with a *nom de plume*. I am not sure that he has published anything with his own name.

One of his earliest works — if not his earliest — was "The Adventures of Jeremy Levis, by Himself," in one volume, a kind of medley of fact, fiction, satire, criticism, and novel philosophy. It is a dashing, reckless *brochure*, brimful of talent and audacity. Of course it was covertly admired by the few, and loudly condemned by all of the many who can fairly be said to have seen it at all. It had no great circulation. There was something wrong, I fancy, in the mode of its issue.

"Jeremy Levis" was followed by "The Dream of Alla-Ad-Deen, from the romance of 'Anastasia,' by Charles Erskine White, D. D." This is a thin pamphlet of thirty-two pages, each page containing about a hundred and forty words. Alla-Ad-Deen is the son

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of Aladdin, of "wonderful lamp" memory, and the story is in the "Vision of Mirza," or "Rasselas" way. The design is to reconcile us to death and evil, on the somewhat unphilosophical ground that comparatively we are of little importance in the scale of creation. The author himself supposes this scale to be infinite, and thus his argument proves too much; for if evil should be regarded by man as of no consequence because, "comparatively," *he* is of none, it must be regarded as of no consequence by the angels for a similar reason — and so on in a never-ending ascent. In other words, the only thing proved is the rather bull-ish proposition that evil is no evil at all. I do not find that the "Dream" elicited any attention. It would have been more appropriately published in one of our magazines.

Next in order came, I believe, "The Confessions of a Poet, by Himself." This was in two volumes, of the ordinary novel form, but printed very openly. It made much noise in the literary world, and no little curiosity was excited in regard to its author, who was generally supposed to be John Neal. There were some grounds for this supposition, the tone and matter of the narrative bearing much resemblance to those of "Errata" and "Seventy-Six," especially in the points of boldness and vigor. The "Confessions," however, far surpassed any production of Mr. Neal's in a certain air of cultivation (if not exactly of scholarship) which pervaded it, as well as in the management of its construction — a particular in which the author of "The Battle of Niagara" invariably fails; there is no precision, no finish, about anything he does — always an excessive force, but little of refined art. Mr. Neal seems to be deficient in a sense of com-

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pleteness. He begins well, vigorously, startlingly, and proceeds by fits, quite at random, now prosing, now exciting vivid interest, but his conclusions are sure to be hurried and indistinct, so that the reader perceives a falling off, and closes the book with dissatisfaction. He has done nothing which, as a whole, is even respectable, and "The Confessions" are quite remarkable for their artistic unity and perfection. But in higher regards they are to be commended. I do not think, indeed, that a better book of its kind has been written in America. To be sure, it is not precisely the work to place in the hands of a lady; but its scenes of passion are intensely wrought, its incidents are striking and original, its sentiments audacious and suggestive at least, if not at all times tenable. In a word, it is that rare thing, a fiction of power without rudeness. Its spirit, in general, resembles that of "Miserrimus" and "Martin Faber."

Partly on account of what most persons would term their licentiousness, partly, also, on account of the prevalent idea that Mr. Neal (who was never very popular with the press) had written them, "The Confessions," by the newspapers, were most unscrupulously misrepresented and abused. The "Commercial Advertiser" of New York was, it appears, foremost in condemnation, and Mr. Osborn thought proper to avenge his wrongs by the publication of a bulky satirical poem, levelled at the critics in general, but more especially at Colonel Stone, the editor of the "Commercial." This satire (which was published in exquisite style as regards print and paper) was entitled "The Vision of Rubeta." Owing to the high price necessarily set upon the book, no great many copies were sold, but the few that got into circulation

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made quite a hubbub, and with reason, for the satire was not only bitter but personal in the last degree. It was, moreover, very censurably indecent — filthy is, perhaps, the more appropriate word. The press, without exception, or nearly so, condemned it in loud terms, without taking the trouble to investigate its pretensions as a literary work. But as "The Confessions of a Poet" was *one* of the best novels of its kind ever written in this country, so "The Vision of Rubeta" was decidedly *the best* satire. For its vulgarity and gross personality there is no defence, but its mordacity cannot be gainsaid. In calling it, however, the best American satire, I do not intend any excessive commendation — for it is, in fact, the *only* satire composed by an American. Trumbull's clumsy work is nothing at all, and then we have Halleck's "Croakers," which is very feeble — but what is there besides? "The Vision" is our best satire, and still a sadly deficient one. It was bold enough and bitter enough, and well constructed and decently versified, but it failed in *sarcasm* because its malignity was permitted to render itself evident. The author is never very severe because he is never sufficiently cool. We laugh not so much at the objects of his satire as we do at himself for getting into so great a passion. But, perhaps, under no circumstances is wit the *forte* of Mr. Osborn. He has few equals at downright invective.

The "Vision" was succeeded by "Arthur Carryl and other Poems," including an additional canto of the satire, and several happy although not in all cases accurate or comprehensive imitations in English of the Greek and Roman metres. "Arthur Carryl" is a fragment, in the manner of "Don Juan." I do not

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think it especially meritorious. It has, however, a truth-telling and discriminative preface, and its notes are well worthy perusal. Some opinions embraced in these latter on the topic of versification I have examined in one of the series of articles called "Marginalia."

I am not aware that since "Arthur Carryl" Mr. Osborn has written anything more than a "Treatise on Oil Painting," issued not long ago by Messrs. Wiley and Putnam. This work is highly spoken of by those well qualified to judge, but is, I believe, principally a compilation or compendium.

In personal character, Mr. Osborn is one of the most remarkable men I ever yet had the pleasure of meeting. He is undoubtedly one of "Nature's own noblemen," full of generosity, courage, honor — chivalrous in every respect, but, unhappily, carrying his ideas of chivalry, or rather of independence, to the point of Quixotism, if not of absolute insanity. He has no doubt been misapprehended, and therefore wronged by the world; but he should not fail to remember that the source of the wrong lay in his own idiosyncrasy — one altogether unintelligible and unappreciable by the mass of mankind.

He is a member of one of the oldest and most influential, formerly one of the wealthiest, families in New York. His acquirements and accomplishments are many and unusual. As poet, painter, and musician, he has succeeded nearly equally well, and absolutely succeeded as each. His scholarship is extensive. In the French and Italian languages he is quite at home, and in everything he is thorough and accurate. His critical abilities are to be highly respected, although he is apt to swear somewhat too roundly by John-

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son and Pope. Imagination is not Mr. Osborn's *forte.*

He is about thirty-two or three — certainly not more than thirty-five years of age. In person he is well made, probably five feet ten or eleven, muscular and active. Hair, eyes, and complexion, rather light; fine teeth; the whole expression of the countenance manly, frank, and prepossessing in the highest degree.

III

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK

The name of HALLECK is at least as well established in the poetical world as that of any American. Our principal poets are, perhaps, most frequently named in this order — Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Sprague, Longfellow, Willis, and so on — Halleck coming second in the series, but holding, in fact, a rank in the public opinion quite equal to that of Bryant. The accuracy of the arrangement as above made may, indeed, be questioned. For my own part, I should have it thus — Longfellow, Bryant, Halleck, Willis, Sprague, Dana; and, estimating rather the poetic capacity than the poems actually accomplished, there are three or four comparatively unknown writers whom I would place in the series between Bryant and Halleck, while there are about a dozen whom I should assign a position between Willis and Sprague. Two dozen at least might find room between Sprague and Dana — this latter, I fear, owing a very large portion of his reputation to his *quondam* editorial connection with the "North American Review." One or two poets, now in my mind's eye, I should have no hesita-

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tion in posting above even Mr. Longfellow — still not intending this as very extravagant praise.

It is noticeable, however, that, in the arrangement which I attribute to the popular understanding, the order observed is nearly, if not exactly, that of the ages — the poetic ages — of the individual poets. Those rank first who were first known. The priority has established the strength of impression. Nor is this result to be accounted for by mere reference to the old saw — that first impressions are the strongest. Gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyperpatriotic triumph have been blended, and finally confounded with admiration or appreciation in regard to the pioneers of American literature, among whom there is not one whose productions have not been grossly overrated by his countrymen. Hitherto we have been in no mood to view with calmness and discuss with discrimination the real claims of the few who were first in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as at one period she half affected and wholly wished to believe. Is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and Mr. Paulding nearly all, of his reputation as a novelist to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither of these gentlemen could have written are written daily by native authors, without attracting much more of commendation than can be included in a newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this happens because there is no longer either reason or wit in the query, "Who reads an American book?"

I mean to say, of course, that Mr. Halleck, in the apparent public estimate, maintains a somewhat better

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position than that to which, on absolute grounds, he is entitled. There is something, too, in the *bonhomie* of certain of his compositions — something altogether distinct from poetic merit — which has aided to establish him; and much, also, must be admitted on the score of his personal popularity, which is deservedly great. With all these allowances, however, there will still be found a large amount of poetical fame to which he is *fairly* entitled.

He has written very little, although he began at an early age — when quite a boy, indeed. His "juvenile" works, however, have been kept very judiciously from the public eye. Attention was first called to him by his satires, signed "Croaker" and "Croaker & Co.," published in the New York "Evening Post," in 1819. Of these the pieces with the signature "Croaker & Co." were the joint work of Halleck and his friend Drake. The political and personal features of these *jeux d'esprit* gave them a consequence and a notoriety to which they are entitled on no other account. They are not without a species of drollery, but are loosely and no doubt carelessly written.

Neither was "Fanny," which closely followed the "Croakers," constructed with any great deliberation. "It was printed," say the ordinary memoirs, "within three weeks from its commencement;" but the truth is, that a couple of days would have been an ample allowance of time for any such composition. If we except a certain gentlemanly ease and insouciance, with some fancy of illustration, there is really very little about this poem to be admired. There has been no positive avowal of its authorship, although there can be no doubt of its having been written by Halleck. He, I presume, does not esteem it very highly. It is

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a mere extravaganza, in close imitation of "Don Juan" — a vehicle for squibs at cotemporary persons and things.

Our poet, indeed, seems to have been much impressed by "Don Juan," and attempts to engraft its farcicalities even upon the grace and delicacy of "Alnwick Castle," as, for example, in —

> "Men in the coal and cattle line,
> From Teviot's bard and hero land,
> From royal Berwick's beach of sand,
> From Wooler, Morpeth, Hexham, *and*
> Newcastle-upon-Tyne."

These things may lay claim to oddity, but no more. They are totally out of keeping with the tone of the sweet poem into which they are thus clumsily introduced, and serve no other purpose than to deprive it of all unity of effect. If a poet *must* be farcical, let him be just that; he can be nothing better at the same moment. To be drolly sentimental or even sentimentally droll, is intolerable to men and gods and columns.

"Alnwick Castle" is distinguished, in general, by that air of quiet grace, both in thought and expression, which is the prevailing feature of the muse of Halleck. Its second stanza is a good specimen of this manner. The commencement of the fourth belongs to a very high order of poetry.

> "Wild roses by the Abbey towers
> Are gay in their young bud and bloom —
> *They were born of a race of funeral flowers*
> That garlanded, in long-gone hours,
> A Templar's knightly tomb."

This is gloriously imaginative, and the effect is singularly increased by the sudden transition from iambuses to anapæsts. The passage is, I think, the

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noblest to be found in Halleck, and I would be at a loss to discover its parallel in all American poetry.

"Marco Bozzaris" has much lyrical without any great amount of *ideal* beauty. Force is its prevailing feature, — force resulting rather from well-ordered metre, vigorous rhythm, and a judicious disposal of the circumstances of the poem than from any of the truer lyric material. I should do my conscience great wrong were I to speak of "Marco Bozzaris" as it is the fashion to speak of it, at least in print. Even as a lyric or ode it is surpassed by many American and a multitude of foreign compositions of a similar character.

"Burns" has numerous passages exemplifying its author's felicity of expression; as, for instance —

> "Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines,
> Shrines to no code or creed confined, —
> *The Delphian vales, the Palestines,*
> *The Meccas of the mind.*"

And, again: —

> "There have been loftier themes than his,
> *And longer scrolls and louder lyres,*
> *And lays lit up with Poesy's*
> *Purer and holier fires.*"

But to the sentiment involved in this last quatrain I feel disposed to yield an assent more thorough than might be expected. Burns, indeed, was the puppet of circumstance. As a poet, no person on the face of the earth has been more extravagantly, more absurdly overrated.

"The Poet's Daughter" is one of the most characteristic works of Halleck, abounding in his most distinctive traits — grace, expression, repose, insouciance. The vulgarity of

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"I 'm busy in the cotton trade
And sugar line,"

has, I rejoice to see, been omitted in the late editions. The eleventh stanza is certainly not English as it stands, and, besides, is quite unintelligible. What is the meaning of this? —

"But her who asks, though first among
The good, the beautiful, the young,
The birthright of a spell more strong
Than these have brought her."

The "Lines on the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake" is, as a whole, one of the best poems of its author. Its simplicity and delicacy of sentiment will recommend it to all readers. It is, however, carelessly written, and the first quatrain,

"Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days;
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise,"

although beautiful, bears too close a resemblance to the still more beautiful lines of Wordsworth: —

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love."

In versification Mr. Halleck is much as usual, although in this regard Mr. Bryant has paid him numerous compliments. "Marco Bozzaris" has certainly some vigor of rhythm; but its author, in short, writes carelessly, loosely, and, as a matter of course, seldom effectively, so far as the outworks of literature are concerned.

Of late days he has nearly given up the Muses, and

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we recognize his existence as a poet chiefly by occasional translations from the Spanish or German.

Personally, he is a man to be admired, respected, but more especially beloved. His address has all the captivating *bonhomie* which is the leading feature of his poetry, and, indeed, of his whole moral nature. With his friends he is all ardor, enthusiasm, and cordiality; but to the world at large he is reserved, shunning society, into which he is seduced only with difficulty, and upon rare occasions. The love of solitude seems to have become with him a passion.

He is a good modern linguist, and an excellent belles-lettres scholar; in general, has read a great deal, although very discursively. He is what the world calls *ultra* in most of his opinions, more particularly about literature and politics, and is fond of broaching and supporting paradoxes. He converses fluently, with animation and zeal; is choice and accurate in his language, exceedingly quick at repartee, and apt at anecdote. His manners are courteous, with dignity and a little tincture of Gallicism. His age is about fifty. In height he is probably five feet seven. He *has been* stout, but may now be called well-proportioned. His forehead is a noble one, broad, massive, and intellectual, a little bald about the temples; eyes dark and brilliant, but not large; nose Grecian; chin prominent; mouth finely chiselled and full of expression, although the lips are thin; his smile is peculiarly sweet.

In "Graham's Magazine" for September, 1843, there appeared an engraving of Mr. Halleck from a painting by Inman. The likeness conveys a good general idea of the man, but is far too stout and youthful-looking for his appearance at present.

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His usual pursuits have been commercial, but he is now the principal superintendent of the business of Mr. John Jacob Astor. He is unmarried.

ANN S. STEPHENS

MRS. STEPHENS has made no collection of her works, but has written much for the magazines, and well. Her compositions have been brief tales with occasional poems. She made her first "sensation" in obtaining a premium of four hundred dollars, offered for "the best prose story" by some one of our journals, her "Mary Derwent" proving the successful article. The *amount* of the prize, however, — a much larger one than it has been the custom to offer, — had more to do with the *éclat* of the success than had the positive merit of the tale, although this is very considerable. She has subsequently written several better things — "Malina Gray," for example, "Alice Copley," and "The Two Dukes." These are on serious subjects. In comic ones she has comparatively failed. She is fond of the bold, striking, trenchant — in a word, of the melodramatic; has a quick appreciation of the picturesque, and is not unskilful in delineations of character. She seizes adroitly on salient incidents and presents them with vividness to the eye, but in their combinations or adaptations she is by no means so thoroughly at home — that is to say, her plots are not so good as are their individual items. Her style is what the critics usually term "powerful," but lacks real power through its verboseness and floridity. It is, in fact, generally turgid — even bombastic — involved, needlessly parenthetical, and superabundant in epithets, although these latter are frequently well

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chosen. Her sentences are, also, for the most part too long; we forget their commencements ere we get at their terminations. Her faults, nevertheless, both in matter and manner, belong to the effervescence of high talent, if not exactly of genius.

Of Mrs. Stephens's poetry I have seen so very little that I feel myself scarcely in condition to speak of it.

She began her literary life, I believe, by editing the "Portland Magazine," and has since been announced as editress of the "Ladies' Companion," a monthly journal published some years ago in New York, and also, at a later period, of "Graham's Magazine," and subsequently, again, of "Peterson's National Magazine." These announcements were announcements and no more; the lady had nothing to do with the editorial control of either of the three last-named works.

The portrait of Mrs. Stephens which appeared in "Graham's Magazine" for November, 1844, cannot fairly be considered a likeness at all. She is tall and slightly inclined to embonpoint — an English figure. Her forehead is somewhat low, but broad; her features generally massive, but full of life and intellectuality. The eyes are blue and brilliant; the hair blond and very luxuriant.

ÉVERT A. DUYCKINCK

MR. DUYCKINCK is one of the most influential of the New York *littérateurs*, and has done a great deal for the interests of American letters. Not the least important service rendered by him was the projection and editorship of Wiley and Putnam's "Library of Choice Reading," a series which brought to public

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notice many valuable foreign works which had been suffering under neglect in this country, and at the same time afforded unwonted encouragement to native authors by publishing their books, in good style and in good company, without trouble or risk to the authors themselves, and in the very teeth of the disadvantages arising from the want of an international copyright law. At one period it seemed that this happy scheme was to be overwhelmed by the competition of rival publishers — taken, in fact, quite out of the hands of those who, by "right of discovery," were entitled at least to its first-fruits. A great variety of "Libraries," in imitation, were set on foot, but whatever may have been the temporary success of any of these latter, the original one had already too well established itself in the public favor to be overthrown, and thus has not been prevented from proving of great benefit to our literature at large.

Mr. Duyckinck has slyly acquired much fame and numerous admirers under the *nom de plume* of "Felix Merry." The various essays thus signed have attracted attention everywhere from the judicious. The style is remarkable for its very unusual blending of purity and ease with a seemingly inconsistent originality, force, and independence.

"Felix Merry," in connection with Mr. Cornelius Matthews, was one of the editors and originators of "Arcturus," decidedly the very best magazine in many respects ever published in the United States. A large number of its most interesting papers were the work of Mr. Duyckinck. The magazine was, upon the whole, a little *too good* to enjoy extensive popularity — although I am here using an equivocal phrase, for a *better* journal might have been far more

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acceptable to the public. I must be understood, then, as employing the epithet "good" in the sense of the literary quietists. The general taste of "Arcturus" was, I think, *excessively tasteful;* but this character applies rather more to its external or mechanical appearance than to its essential qualities. Unhappily, magazines and other similar publications are, in the beginning, judged chiefly by externals. People saw "Arcturus" looking very much like other works which had failed through notorious dulness, although admitted as *arbitri elegantiarum* in all points of what is termed taste or decorum; and they, the people, had no patience to examine any farther. Cæsar's wife was required not only to be virtuous, but to seem so; and in letters it is demanded not only that we be not stupid, but that we do not array ourselves in the habiliments of stupidity.

It cannot be said of "Arcturus" exactly that it wanted force. It was deficient in power of impression, and this deficiency is to be attributed mainly to the exceeding brevity of its articles — a brevity that degenerated into mere paragraphism, precluding dissertation or argument, and thus all permanent effect. The magazine, in fact, had some of the worst or most inconvenient features without any of the compensating advantages of a weekly literary newspaper. The mannerism to which I refer seemed to have its source in undue admiration and consequent imitation of "The Spectator."

In addition to his more obvious literary engagements, Mr. Duyckinck writes a great deal, editorially and otherwise, for the "Democratic Review," the "Morning News," and other periodicals.

In character he is remarkable, distinguished for the

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bonhomie of his manner, his simplicity and single-mindedness, his active beneficence, his hatred of wrong done even to any enemy, and especially for an almost Quixotic fidelity to his friends. He seems in perpetual good-humor with all things, and I have no doubt that in his secret heart he is an optimist.

In person he is equally simple as in character — the one is a pendant of the other. He is about five feet eight inches high, somewhat slender. The forehead, phrenologically, is a good one; eyes and hair light; the whole expression of the face that of serenity and benevolence, contributing to give an idea of youthfulness. He is probably thirty, but does not seem to be twenty-five. His dress, also, is in full keeping with his character, scrupulously neat but plain, and conveying an instantaneous conviction of the gentleman. He is a descendant of one of the oldest and best Dutch families in the State. Married.

MARY GOVE

MRS. MARY GOVE, under the pseudonym of "Mary Orme," has written many excellent papers for the magazines. Her subjects are usually tinctured with the mysticism of the transcendentalists, but are truly imaginative. Her style is quite remarkable for its luminousness and precision, two qualities very rare with her sex. An article entitled "The Gift of Prophecy," published originally in the "Broadway Journal," is a fine specimen of her manner.

Mrs. Gove, however, has acquired less notoriety by her literary compositions than by her lectures on physiology to classes of females. These lectures are said to have been instructive and useful; they cer-

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tainly elicited much attention. Mrs. Gove has also given public discourses on mesmerism, I believe, and other similar themes, — matters which put to the severest test the credulity, or, more properly, the faith of mankind. She is, I think, a mesmerist, a Swedenborgian, a phrenologist, a homœopathist, and a disciple of Priessnitz — what more I am not prepared to say.

She is rather below the medium height, somewhat thin, with dark hair and keen, intelligent black eyes. She converses well and with enthusiasm. In many respects a very interesting woman.

JAMES ALDRICH

MR. ALDRICH has written much for the magazines, etc., and at one time assisted Mr. Park Benjamin in the conduct of the "New World." He also originated, I believe, and edited a not very long-lived or successful weekly paper, called the "Literary Gazette," an imitation in its external appearance of the London journal of the same name. I am not aware that he has made any collection of his writings. His poems abound in the true poetic spirit, but they are frequently chargeable with plagiarism, or something much like it. True, I have seen but three of Mr. Aldrich's compositions in verse — the three (or perhaps there are four of them) included by Doctor Griswold in his "Poets and Poetry of America." Of these three (or four), however, there are two which I cannot help regarding as palpable plagiarisms. Of one of them, in especial, "*A* Death-Bed," it is impossible to say a plausible word in defence. Both in matter and

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manner it is nearly identical with a little piece entitled "*The* Death-Bed," by Thomas Hood.

The charge of plagiarism, nevertheless, is a purely literary one; and a plagiarism even distinctly proved by no means necessarily involves any moral delinquency. This proposition applies very especially to what appear to be poetical thefts. The poetic sentiment presupposes a keen appreciation of the beautiful with a longing for its assimilation into the poetic identity. What the poet intensely admires becomes, thus, in very fact, although only partially, a portion of his own soul. Within this soul it has a secondary origination; and the poet, thus possessed by another's thought, cannot be said to take of it possession. But in either view he thoroughly feels it as *his own;* and the tendency to this feeling is counteracted only by the sensible presence of the true, palpable origin of the thought in the volume whence he has derived it — an origin which, in the long lapse of years, it is impossible *not* to forget, should the thought itself, as it often is, be forgotten. But the frailest association will regenerate it; it springs up with all the vigor of a new birth; its absolute originality is not with the poet a matter even of suspicion; and when he has written it, and printed it, and on its account is charged with plagiarism, there will be no one more entirely astounded than himself. Now, from what I have said, it appears that the liability to accidents of this character is in the direct ratio of the poetic sentiment, of the susceptibility to the poetic impression; and, in fact, all literary history demonstrates that, for the most frequent and palpable plagiarisms, we must search the works of the most eminent poets.

Since penning the above I have found five quatrains

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by Mr. Aldrich, with the heading "Molly Gray." These verses are in the fullest exemplification of what I have just said of their author, evincing at once, in the most remarkable manner, both his merit as an imaginative poet and his unconquerable proneness to imitation. I quote the two concluding quatrains.

"Pretty, fairy Molly Gray!
What may thy fit emblem be?
Stream or star or bird or flower —
They are all too poor for thee.

"No type to match thy beauty
My wandering fancy brings —
Not fairer than its chrysalis
Thy soul with her golden wings!"

Here the "Pretty, fairy Molly Gray!" will put every reader in mind of Tennyson's "Airy, fairy Lilian!" by which Mr. Aldrich's whole poem has been clearly suggested; but the thought in the *finale* is, as far as I know anything about it, original, and is not more happy than happily expressed.

Mr. Aldrich is about thirty-six years of age. In regard to his person there is nothing to be especially noted.

THOMAS DUNN BROWN

I have seen one or two scraps of verse with this gentleman's *nom de plume*[1] appended, which had considerable merit. For example: —

"A sound melodious shook the breeze
When thy beloved name was heard;
Such was the music in the word,
Its dainty rhythm the pulses stirred

[1] Thomas Dunn English.

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But passed forever joys like these.
There is no joy, no light, no day;
But black despair and night *al-way*
And thickening gloom:
And this, Azthene, is my doom.

"Was it for this, for weary years,
I strove among the sons of men,
And by *the magic of my pen* —
Just sorcery — walked the lion's den
Of slander, void of tears and fears —
And all for thee? For thee! — alas,
As is the image on a glass,
So baseless *seems*,
Azthene, all my early *dreams*."

I must confess, however, that I do not appreciate the "dainty rhythm" of such a word as "Azthene," and, perhaps, there is some taint of egotism in the passage about "the magic" of Mr. Brown's pen. Let us be charitable, however, and set all this down under the head of the pure imagination or invention — the first of poetical requisites. The inexcusable sin of Mr. Brown is imitation, if this be not too mild a term. When Barry Cornwall, for example, sings about a "dainty rhythm," Mr. Brown forthwith, in B flat, hoots about it too. He has taken, however, his most unwarrantable liberties in the way of plagiarism, with Mr. Henry B. Hirst, of Philadelphia, a poet whose merits have not yet been properly estimated.

I place Mr. Brown, to be sure, on my list of literary people not on account of his poetry (which I presume he himself is not weak enough to estimate very highly), but on the score of his having edited, for several months, "with the aid of numerous collaborators," a magazine called the "Aristidean." This

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work, although professedly a "monthly," was issued at irregular intervals, and was unfortunate, I fear, in not attaining at any period more than about fifty subscribers.

Mr. Brown has at least that amount of talent which would enable him to succeed in his father's profession — that of a ferryman on the Schuylkill — but the fate of the "Aristidean" should indicate to him that, to prosper in any higher walk of life, he must apply himself to study. No spectacle can be more ludicrous than that of a man without the commonest school education busying himself in attempts to instruct mankind on topics of polite literature. The absurdity, in such cases, does not lie merely in the ignorance displayed by the would-be instructor, but in the transparency of the shifts by which he endeavors to keep this ignorance concealed. The "editor of the 'Aristidean,'" for example, was not the public laughing-stock, throughout the five months of his magazine's existence, so much on account of writing "lay" for "lie," "went" for "gone," "set" for "sit," etc. etc., or for coupling nouns in the plural with verbs in the singular — as when he writes, above,

> "so baseless *seems*,
> Azthene, all my earthly *dreams;*"

he was not, I say, laughed at *so much* on account of his excusable deficiencies in English grammar (although an editor should undoubtedly be able to write *his own name*) as on account of the pertinacity with which he exposed his weakness, in lamenting the "typographical blunders" which so unluckily *would* creep into his work. He should have reflected that there is not in all America a proof-reader so blind as

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to permit *such* errors to escape him. The rhyme, for instance, in the matter of the "dreams" that "seems," would have distinctly shown even the most uneducated printer's devil that he, the devil, had no right to meddle with so obviously an intentional peculiarity.

Were I writing merely for American readers, I should not, of course, have introduced Mr. Brown's name in this book. With us, grotesqueries such as the "Aristidean" and its editor are not altogether unparalleled, and are sufficiently well understood; but my purpose is to convey to foreigners some idea of a condition of literary affairs among us, which otherwise they might find it difficult to comprehend or to conceive. That Mr. Brown's blunders are really such as I have described them — that I have not distorted their character or exaggerated their grossness in any respect — that there existed in New York for some months, as conductor of a magazine that called itself "*the organ of the Tyler party*," and was even mentioned at times by respectable papers, a man who obviously *never went to school* and was so profoundly ignorant as not to know that he could not spell — are serious and positive facts, uncolored in the slightest degree, demonstrable, in a word, upon the spot, by reference to almost any editorial sentence upon any page of the magazine in question. But a single instance will suffice. Mr. Hirst, in one of his poems, has the lines,

> "Oh Odin! 't was pleasure — 't was passion to see
> Her serfs sweep like wolves on a lambkin like me."

At page 200 of the "Aristidean" for September, 1845, Mr. Brown, commenting on the English of the passage, says: — "This lambkin might have used

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better language than '*like me*' — unless he intended it for a specimen of choice Choctaw, when it may, for all we know to the contrary, pass muster." It is needless, I presume, to proceed farther in a search for the most direct proof possible or conceivable, of the ignorance of Mr. Brown, who, in similar cases, invariably writes, — "like I."

In an editorial announcement on page 242 of the same "number," he says: — "This and the three succeeding *numbers brings* the work up to January and with the two *numbers* previously published *makes* up a volume or half year of *numbers*." But enough of this absurdity; Mr. Brown had, for the motto on his magazine cover, the words of Richelieu,

"Men call me cruel;
I am not: — I am *just*."

Here the two monosyllables "an ass" should have been appended. They were no doubt omitted through "one of those d——d typographical blunders" which, through life, have been at once the bane and the antidote of Mr. Brown.

I make these remarks in no spirit of unkindness. Mr. Brown is yet young — certainly not more than thirty-eight or nine — and might readily improve himself at points where he is most defective. No one of any generosity would think the worse of him for getting private instruction.

I do not personally know him. About his appearance there is nothing very remarkable — except that he exists in a perpetual state of vacillation between mustachio and goatee. In character, a *windbeutel*.

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HENRY CARY

DOCTOR GRISWOLD introduces Mr. Cary to the appendix of "The Poets and Poetry," as Mr. Henry Carey, and gives him credit for an Anacreontic song of much merit entitled, or commencing, "Old Wine to Drink." This was *not* written by Mr. Cary. He has composed little verse, if any; but, under the *nom de plume* of "John Waters," has acquired some note by a series of prose essays in the "New York American," and the "Knickerbocker." These essays have merit, unquestionably; but some person, in an article furnished the "Broadway Journal," before my assumption of its editorship, has gone to the extreme of toadyism in their praise. This critic (possibly Mr. Briggs) thinks that "John Waters" "is in some sort a Sam Rogers" — "resembles Lamb in fastidiousness of taste" — "has a finer artistic taste than the author of the 'Sketch Book'" — that his "sentences are the most perfect in the language — too perfect to be peculiar" — that "it would be a vain task to hunt through them all for a superfluous conjunction," and that "we need them (the works of 'John Waters'!) as models of style in these days of rodomontades and *Macaulayisms!*"

The truth seems to be that Mr. Cary is a vivacious, fanciful, entertaining essayist — a fifth or sixth rate one — with a style that, as times go — in view of such stylists as Mr. Briggs, for example — may be termed respectable, and no more. What the critic of the "Broadway Journal" wishes us to understand by a style that is "too perfect," "the most perfect," etc., it is scarcely worth while to inquire, since it is gener-

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ally supposed that "perfect" admits of no degrees of comparison; but if Mr. Briggs (or whoever it is) finds it "a vain task to hunt" through all Mr. "John Waters's" works "for a superfluous conjunction," there are few schoolboys who would not prove more successful hunters than Mr. Briggs.

"It was well filled," says the essayist, on the very page containing these encomiums, "*and* yet the number of performers," etc. "We paid our visit to the incomparable ruins of the castle, *and* then proceeded to retrace our steps, and examine our wheels at every post-house, reached," etc. "After consultation with a mechanic at Heidelberg, *and* finding that," etc. The last sentence should read, "Finding, after consultation," etc. — the "and" would thus be avoided. Those in the two sentences first quoted are obviously pleonastic. Mr. Cary, in fact, abounds *very especially* in superfluities (as here, for example) — "He seated himself at a piano *that was* near the front of the stage") — and, to speak the truth, is continually guilty of all kinds of grammatical improprieties. I repeat that, in this respect, he is decent, and no more.

Mr. Cary is what Doctor Griswold calls a "gentleman of elegant leisure." He is wealthy and much addicted to letters and *virtù*. For a long time he was President of the Phœnix Bank of New York, and the principal part of his life has been devoted to business. There is nothing remarkable about his personal appearance.

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CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH

The REVEREND C. P. CRANCH is one of the least intolerable of the school of Boston transcendentalists — and, in fact, I believe that he has at last "come out from among them," abandoned their doctrines (whatever they are), and given up their company in disgust. He was at one time one of the most noted, and undoubtedly one of the least absurd contributors to the "Dial," but has reformed his habits of thought and speech, domiciliated himself in New York, and set up the easel of an artist in one of the Gothic chambers of the University.

About two years ago a volume of "Poems" by Christopher Pearse Cranch was published by Carey and Hart. It was most unmercifully treated by the critics, and much injustice, in my opinion, was done to the poet. He seems to me to possess unusual vivacity of fancy and dexterity of expression, while his versification is remarkable for its accuracy, vigor, and even for its originality of effect. I might say, perhaps, rather more than all this, and maintain that he has imagination if he would only condescend to employ it, which he will not, or *would* not until lately — the word-compounders and quibble concocters of Frogpondium having inoculated him with a preference for Imagination's half sister, the Cinderella, Fancy. Mr. Cranch has seldom contented himself with harmonious combinations of thought. There must always be, to afford him perfect satisfaction, a certain amount of the odd, of the whimsical, of the affected, of the bizarre. He is as full of absurd conceits as Cowley or Donne, with this difference, that the conceits of these latter are Euphuisms beyond redemption — flat, irremediable,

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self-contented nonsensicalities, and in so much are good of their kind; but the conceits of Mr. Cranch are, for the most part, conceits intentionally manufactured, for conceit's sake, out of the material for properly imaginative, harmonious, proportionate, or poetical ideas. We see every moment that he has been at uncommon pains to make a fool of himself.

But perhaps I am wrong in supposing that I am at all in condition to decide on the merits of Mr. Cranch's poetry, which is professedly addressed to the few. "Him we will seek," says the poet —

> "Him we will seek, and none but him,
> Whose inward sense hath not grown dim;
> Whose soul is steeped in Nature's tinct,
> And to the Universal linked;
> Who loves the beauteous Infinite
> With deep and ever new delight,
> And carrieth where'er he goes
> The inborn sweetness of the rose,
> The perfume as of Paradise,
> The talisman above all price,
> The optic glass that wins from far
> The meaning of the utmost star,
> The key that opes the golden doors
> Where earth and heaven have piled their stores,
> The magic ring, the enchanter's wand,
> The title-deed to Wonder-Land,
> The wisdom that o'erlooketh sense,
> The clairvoyance of Innocence."

This is all very well, fanciful, pretty, and neatly turned — all with the exception of the two last lines, and it is a pity they were not left out. It is laughable to see that the transcendental poets, if beguiled for a minute or two into respectable English and common sense, are always sure to remember their cue just as they get to the end of their song, which, by way of salvo, they then round off with a bit of doggerel about

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"wisdom that o'erlook*eth* sense" and "the clairvoyance of Innocence." It is especially observable that, in adopting the cant of thought, the cant of phraseology is adopted at the same instant. Can Mr. Cranch, or can anybody else, inform me why it is that, in the really sensible opening passages of what I have here quoted, he employs the modern, and only in the final couplet of goosetherumfoodle makes use of the obsolete terminations of verbs in the third person singular, present tense?

One of the best of Mr. Cranch's compositions is undoubtedly his poem on Niagara. It has some natural thoughts, and grand ones, suiting the subject; but then they are more than half-divested of their nature by the attempt at adorning them with oddity of expression. Quaintness is an admissible and important adjunct to ideality — an adjunct whose value has been long misapprehended — but in picturing the sublime it is altogether out of place. What idea of power, of grandeur, for example, can any human being connect even with Niagara, when Niagara is described in language so trippingly fantastical, so palpably adapted to a purpose, as that which follows?

"I stood upon a speck of ground;
Before me fell a stormy ocean.
I was like a captive bound;
And around
A universe of sound
Troubled the heavens with ever-quivering motion.

"Down, down forever — down, down forever —
Something falling, falling, falling;
Up, up forever — up, up forever,
Resting never,
Boiling up forever,
Steam-clouds shot up with thunder-bursts appalling."

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It is difficult to conceive anything more ludicrously out of keeping than the thoughts of these stanzas and the petit-maître, fidgety, hop-skip-and-jump air of the words and the Liliputian parts of the versification.

A somewhat similar metre is adopted by Mr. Cranch in his "Lines on Hearing Triumphant Music," but as the subject is essentially different, so the effect is by no means so displeasing. I copy one of the stanzas as the noblest individual passage which I can find among all the poems of its author.

"That glorious strain!
Oh, from my brain
I see the shadows flitting like scared ghosts!
A light — a light
Shines in to-night
Round the good angels trooping to their posts,
And the black cloud is rent in twain
Before the ascending strain."

Mr. Cranch is well educated, and quite accomplished. Like Mr. Osborn, he is musician, painter, and poet, being in each capacity very respectably successful.

He is about thirty-three or four years of age; in height, perhaps five feet eleven; athletic; front face not unhandsome — the forehead evincing intellect, and the smile pleasant; but the profile is marred by the turning up of the nose, and, altogether, is hard and disagreeable. His eyes and hair are dark brown — the latter worn short, slightly inclined to curl. Thick whiskers meeting under the chin, and much out of keeping with the shirt-collar *à la Byron*. Dresses with marked plainness. He is married.

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IV

SARAH MARGARET FULLER

MISS FULLER was at one time editor, or one of the editors of the "Dial," to which she contributed many of the most forcible and certainly some of the most peculiar papers. She is known, too, by "Summer on the Lakes," a remarkable assemblage of sketches, issued in 1844, by Little and Brown, of Boston. More lately she has published "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," a work which has occasioned much discussion, having had the good fortune to be warmly abused and chivalrously defended. At present, she is assistant editor of the New York "Tribune," or rather a salaried contributor to that journal, for which she has furnished a great variety of matter, chiefly notices of new books, etc., etc., her articles being designated by an asterisk. Two of the best of them were a review of Professor Longfellow's late magnificent edition of his own works (with a portrait), and an appeal to the public in behalf of her friend Harro Harring. The review did her infinite credit; it was frank, candid, independent — in even ludicrous contrast to the usual mere glorifications of the day, giving honor only where honor was due, yet evincing the most thorough capacity to appreciate and the most sincere intention to place in the fairest light the real and idiosyncratic merits of the poet.

In my opinion it is one of the very few reviews of Longfellow's poems, ever published in America, of which the critics have not had abundant reason to be ashamed. Mr. Longfellow is entitled to a certain, and

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very distinguished, rank among the poets of his country; but that country is disgraced by the evident toadyism which would award to his social position and influence, to his fine paper and large type, to his morocco binding and gilt edges, to his flattering portrait of himself, and to the illustrations of his poems by Huntingdon, that amount of indiscriminate approbation which neither could nor would have been given to the poems themselves.

The defence of Harro Harring, or rather the philippic against those who were doing him wrong, was one of the most eloquent and well-*put* articles I have ever yet seen in a newspaper.

"Woman in the Nineteenth Century" is a book which few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller. In the way of independence, of unmitigated radicalism, it is one of the "Curiosities of American Literature," and Doctor Griswold should include it in his book. I need scarcely say that the essay is nervous, forcible, thoughtful, suggestive, brilliant, and to a certain extent scholar-like — for all that Miss Fuller produces is entitled to these epithets — but I must say that the conclusions reached are only in part my own. Not that they are too bold, by any means — too novel, too startling, or too dangerous in their consequences, but that in their attainment too many premises have been distorted, and too many analogical inferences left altogether out of sight. I mean to say that the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences — an intention which can be distinctly comprehended only by throwing the exterior (more sensitive) portions of the mental retina *casually* over the wide field of universal analogy — I

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mean to say that this intention has not been sufficiently considered. Miss Fuller has erred, too, through her own excessive subjectiveness. She judges woman by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozen Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth. Holding these opinions in regard to "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," I still feel myself called upon to disavow the silly, condemnatory criticism of the work which appeared in one of the earlier numbers of the "Broadway Journal." That article was *not* written by myself, and *was* written by my associate, Mr. Briggs.

The most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius (for high genius she unquestionably possesses) is to be obtained, perhaps, from her contributions to the "Dial," and from her "Summer on the Lakes." Many of the descriptions in this volume are unrivalled for graphicality (why is there not such a word?) — for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject. This faculty, too, springs from her subjectiveness, which leads her to paint a scene less by its features than by its effects.

Here, for example, is a portion of her account of Niagara: —

"Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got at last a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it *so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence.* The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. *I felt*

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that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe. I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, *images, such as had never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks.* Again and again this illusion recurred, and even *after I had thought it over and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.* What I liked best was to sit on Table Rock close to the great fall; *there all power of observing details, all separate consciousness was quite lost.*"

The truthfulness of the passages italicised will be felt by all; the feelings described are, perhaps, experienced by every (imaginative) person who visits the fall; but most persons, through predominant subjectiveness, would scarcely be conscious of the feelings, or, at best, would never think of employing them in an attempt to convey to others an impression of the scene. Hence so many desperate failures to convey it on the part of ordinary tourists. Mr. William W. Lord, to be sure, in his poem "Niagara," is sufficiently objective; he describes not the fall, but very properly the effect of the fall upon *him.* He says that it made him think of his *own* greatness, of his *own* superiority, and so forth, and so forth; and it is only when we come to think that the thought of Mr. Lord's greatness is quite idiosyncratic, confined exclusively to Mr. Lord, that we are in condition to understand how, in despite of his objectiveness, he has failed to convey an idea of anything beyond one Mr. William W. Lord.

From the essay entitled "Philip Van Artevelde,"

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I copy a paragraph which will serve at once to exemplify Miss Fuller's more earnest (declamatory) style, and to show the tenor of her prospective speculations: —

"At Chicago I read again 'Philip Van Artevelde,' and certain passages in it will always be in my mind associated with the deep sound of the lake, as heard in the night. I used to read a short time at night, and then open the blind to look out. The moon would be full upon the lake, and the calm breath, pure light, and the deep voice, harmonized well with the thought of the Flemish hero. When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs — no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous in the use of human instruments. A man, religious, virtuous, and — sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle or fleeting shadow, but a great, solemn game, to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who lives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moderately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad to-day by the gift which discerns to-morrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed."

From what I have quoted, a general conception of the prose style of the authoress may be gathered. Her manner, however, is infinitely varied. It is always forcible — but I am not sure that it is always anything else, unless I say picturesque. It rather indicates

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than evinces scholarship. Perhaps only the scholastic, or, more properly, those accustomed to look narrowly at the structure of phrases, would be willing to acquit her of ignorance of grammar — would be willing to attribute her slovenliness to disregard of the shell in anxiety for the kernel, or to waywardness, or to affectation, or to blind reverence for Carlyle — would be able to detect, in her strange and continual inaccuracies, a capacity for the accurate: —

"I cannot sympathize with such an apprehension; the spectacle is *capable to* swallow *up* all such objects."

"It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is *like* to rise suddenly to light."

"I took our *mutual* friends to see her."

"It was always obvious that they had nothing in common *between them*."

"The Indian cannot be looked at truly *except* by a poetic eye."

"McKenney's 'Tour to the Lakes' gives some facts not to be met *with* elsewhere."

"There is that mixture of culture and rudeness in the aspect of things *as* gives a feeling of freedom, etc., etc., etc."

These are merely a few, a very few instances, taken at random from among a multitude of wilful murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk. She uses, too, the word "ignore," a vulgarity adopted only of late days (and to no good purpose, since there is no necessity for it) from the barbarisms of the law, and makes no scruple of giving the Yankee interpretation to the verbs "witness" and "realize," to say nothing of "use," as in the sentence, "I used to read a short time at night." It will not do

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to say, in defence of such words, that in such senses they may be found in certain dictionaries — in that of Bolles, for instance; — *some* kind of "authority" may be found for *any* kind of vulgarity under the sun.

In spite of these things, however, and of her frequent unjustifiable Carlyleisms (such as that of writing sentences which are no sentences, since, to be parsed, reference must be had to sentences preceding), the style of Miss Fuller is one of the very best with which I am acquainted. In general effect, I know no style which surpasses it. It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous; leaving details out of sight, it is everything that a style need be.

I believe that Miss Fuller has written much poetry, although she has published little. That little is tainted with the affectation of the transcendentalists (I use this term, of course, in the sense which the public of late days seem resolved to give it), but is brimful of the poetic sentiment. Here, for example, is something in Coleridge's manner, of which the author of "Genevieve" might have had no reason to be ashamed: —

"A maiden sat beneath a tree;
Tear-bedewed her pale cheeks be,
And she sighed heavily.

"From forth the wood into the *light*
A hunter strides with carol *light*,
And a glance so bold and bright.

"He careless stopped and eyed the maid:
'Why weepest thou?' he gently said;
'I love thee well, be not afraid.'

"He takes her hand and leads her on —
She should have waited there alone,
For he was not her chosen one.

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" He *leans* her head upon his breast —
She knew 't was not her home of rest,
But, ah, she had been sore distrest.

" The sacred stars looked sadly down;
The parting moon appeared to frown,
To see thus dimmed the diamond crown.

" Then from the thicket starts a deer —
The huntsman, seizing *on* his spear,
Cries, 'Maiden, wait thou for me here.'

" She sees him vanish into night —
She starts from sleep in deep affright,
For it was not her own true knight.

" Though but in dream Gunhilda failed,
Though but a fancied ill assailed,
Though she but fancied fault bewailed, —

" Yet thought of day makes dream of night;
She is not worthy of the knight;
The inmost altar burns not bright.

" If loneliness thou canst not bear —
Cannot the dragon's venom dare —
Of the pure meed thou shouldst despair.

" Now sadder that lone maiden sighs;
Far bitterer tears profane her eyes;
Crushed in the dust her heart's flower lies."

To show the evident carelessness with which this poem was constructed, I have italicised an identical rhyme (of about the same force in versification as an identical proposition in logic) and two grammatical improprieties. *To lean* is a neuter verb, and "seizing *on*" is not properly to be called a pleonasm, merely because it is — nothing at all. The concluding line

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is difficult of pronunciation through excess of consonants. I should have preferred, indeed, the anti-penultimate tristich as the *finale* of the poem.

The supposition that the book of an author is a thing apart from the author's self, is, I think, ill-founded. The soul is a cipher, in the sense of a cryptograph; and the shorter a cryptograph is, the more difficulty there is in its comprehension — at a certain point of brevity it would bid defiance to an army of Champollions. And thus he who has written very little, may in that little either conceal his spirit or convey quite an erroneous idea of it — of his acquirements, talents, temper, manner, tenor, and depth (or shallowness) of thought — in a word, of his character, of himself. But this is impossible with him who has written much. Of such a person we get, from his books, not merely a just, but the most just representation. Bulwer, the individual, personal man, in a green velvet waistcoat and amber gloves, is not by any means the veritable Sir Edward Lytton, who is discoverable only in "Ernest Maltravers," where his soul is deliberately and nakedly set forth. And who would ever know Dickens by looking at him or talking with him, or doing anything with him except reading his "Old Curiosity Shop"? What poet, in especial, but must feel at least the better portion of himself more fairly represented in even his commonest sonnet (earnestly written) than in his most elaborate or most intimate personalities?

I put all this as a general proposition, to which Miss Fuller affords a marked exception — to this extent, that her personal character and her printed book are merely one and the same thing. We get access to her soul *as* directly from the one as from the

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other — no *more* readily from this than from that — easily from either. Her acts are bookish, and her books are less thoughts than acts. Her literary and her conversational manner are identical. Here is a passage from her "Summer on the Lakes": —

"The rapids enchanted me far beyond what I expected; they are so swift that they cease to *seem* so — you can think only of their *beauty*. The fountain beyond the Moss islands I discovered for myself, and thought it for some time an *accidental* beauty which it would not do to *leave*, lest I might never see it again. After I found it *permanent*, I returned many times to watch the play of its crest. In the little waterfall beyond, Nature seems, as she often does, to have made a *study* for some larger design. She delights in this — a sketch within a sketch — a dream within *a dream*. Wherever we see it, the lines of the great buttress in the fragment of stone, the hues of the waterfall, copied in the flowers that *star* its bordering mosses, we are *delighted;* for all the lineaments become *fluent*, and we mould the scene in congenial thought with its *genius*."

Now all this is precisely as Miss Fuller would speak it. She is perpetually saying just such things in just such words. To get the conversational woman in the mind's eye, all that is needed is to imagine her reciting the paragraph just quoted; but first let us have the personal woman. She is of the medium height; nothing remarkable about the figure; a profusion of lustrous light hair; eyes a bluish gray, full of fire; capacious forehead; the mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for love — when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the im-

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pression of a sneer. Imagine, now, a person of this description looking you at one moment earnestly in the face, at the next seeming to look only within her own spirit or at the wall; moving nervously every now and then in her chair; speaking in a high key, but musically, deliberately (not hurriedly or loudly), with a delicious distinctness of enunciation — speaking, I say, the paragraph in question, and emphasizing the words which I have italicised, not by impulsion of the breath (as is usual) but by drawing them out as long as possible, nearly closing her eyes the while — imagine all this, and we have both the woman and the authoress before us.

JAMES LAWSON

MR. LAWSON has published, I believe, only "Giordano," a tragedy, and two volumes entitled "Tales and Sketches by a Cosmopolite." The former was condemned (to use a gentle word) some years ago at the Park Theatre; and never was condemnation more religiously deserved. The latter are in so much more tolerable than the former, that they contain one non-execrable thing — "The Dapper Gentleman's Story" — in manner, as in title, an imitation of one of Irving's "Tales of a Traveller."

I mention Mr. Lawson, however, not on account of his literary labors, but because, although a Scotchman, he has always professed to have greatly at heart the welfare of American letters. He is much in the society of authors and booksellers, converses fluently, tells a good story, is of social habits, and, with no taste whatever, is quite enthusiastic on all topics appertaining to taste.

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CAROLINE M. KIRKLAND

MRS. KIRKLAND'S "New Home," published under the *nom de plume* of "Mary Clavers," wrought an undoubted sensation. The cause lay not so much in picturesque description, in racy humor, or in animated individual portraiture, as in truth and novelty. The West at the time was a field comparatively untrodden by the sketcher or the novelist. In certain works, to be sure, we had obtained brief glimpses of character, strange to us sojourners in the civilized East, but to Mrs. Kirkland alone we were indebted for our acquaintance with the *home* and home-life of the backwoodsman. With a fidelity and vigor that prove her pictures to be taken from the very life, she has represented "scenes" that could have occurred only *as* and *where* she has described them. She has placed before us the veritable settlers of the forest, with all their peculiarities, national and individual; their free and fearless spirit; their homely utilitarian views; their shrewd outlooking for self-interest; their thrifty care and inventions multiform; their coarseness of manner, united with real delicacy and substantial kindness when their sympathies are called into action; in a word, with all the characteristics of the Yankee, in a region where the salient points of character are unsmoothed by contact with society. So lifelike were her representations that they have been appropriated as individual portraits by many who have been disposed to plead, trumpet-tongued, against what they supposed to be "the deep damnation of their taking-off."

"Forest Life" succeeded "A New Home," and

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was read with equal interest. It gives us, perhaps, more of the philosophy of Western life, but has the same freshness, freedom, piquancy. Of course, a truthful picture of pioneer habits could never be given in any grave history or essay so well as in the form of narration, where each character is permitted to develop itself; narration, therefore, was very properly adopted by Mrs. Kirkland in both the books just mentioned, and even more entirely in her later volume, "Western Clearings." This is the title of a collection of tales, illustrative, in general, of Western manners, customs, ideas. "The Land Fever" is a story of the wild days when the madness of speculation in land was at its height. It is a richly characteristic sketch, as is also "The Ball at Thram's Huddle." Only those who have had the fortune to visit or live in the "back settlements" can enjoy such pictures to the full. "Chances and Changes" and "Love *vs.* Aristocracy" are more regularly constructed tales, with the "universal passion" as the moving power, but colored with the glowing hues of the West. "The Bee Tree," exhibits a striking but too numerous class among the settlers, and explains, also, the depth of the bitterness that grows out of an unprosperous condition in that "Paradise of the Poor." "Ambuscades" and "Half-Lengths from Life" I remember as two piquant sketches to which an annual, a year or two ago, was indebted for a most unusual sale among the conscious and pen-dreading denizens of the West. "Half-Lengths" turns on the trying subject of caste. "The Schoolmaster's Progress" is full of truth and humor. The Western pedagogue, the stiff, solitary nondescript figure in the drama of a new settlement, occupying a middle position between "our folks" and "company,"

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and "boarding round," is irresistibly amusing, and cannot fail to be recognized as the representative of a class. The occupation, indeed, always seems to mould those engaged in it — they all soon, like Master Horner, learn to "know well what belongs to the pedagogical character, and that facial solemnity stands high on the list of indispensable qualifications." The spelling-school, also, is a "new country" feature which we owe Mrs. Kirkland many thanks for recording. The incidents of "An Embroidered Fact" are singular and picturesque, but not particularly illustrative of the "Clearings." The same may be said of "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds;" but this abounds in capital touches of character; all the horrors of the tale are brought about through suspicion of *pride*, an accusation as destructive at the West as that of witchcraft in olden times, or the cry of mad dog in modern.

In the way of absolute books, Mrs. Kirkland, I believe, has achieved nothing beyond the three volumes specified (with another lately issued by Wiley and Putnam), but she is a very constant contributor to the magazines. Unquestionably, she is one of our best writers, has a province of her own, and in that province has few equals. Her most noticeable trait is a certain freshness of style, seemingly drawn, as her subjects in general, from the West. In the second place is to be observed a species of wit, approximating humor, and so interspersed with pure fun that "wit," after all, is nothing like a definition of it. To give an example; "Old Thoughts on the New Year" commences with a quotation from Tasso's "Aminta":

"Il mondo invecchia
E invecchiando intristisce;"

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and the following is given as a "free translation":

"The world is growing older
And wiser day by day;
Everybody knows beforehand
What you're going to say.
We used to laugh and frolic—
Now we must behave;
Poor old Fun is dead and buried—
Pride dug his grave."

This, if I am not mistaken, is the only specimen of poetry as yet given by Mrs. Kirkland to the world. She has afforded us no means of judging in respect to her inventive powers, although fancy, and even imagination, are apparent in everything she does. Her perceptive faculties enable her to describe with great verisimilitude. Her mere style is admirable, lucid, terse, full of variety, faultlessly pure, and yet bold — so bold as to appear heedless of the ordinary *decora* of composition. In even her most reckless sentences, however, she betrays the woman of refinement, of accomplishment, of unusually thorough education. There are a great many points in which her general manner resembles that of Willis, whom she evidently admires. Indeed, it would not be difficult to pick out from her works an occasional Willisism, not less palpable than happy. For example: —

"*Peaches were like little green velvet buttons when* George was first mistaken for Doctor Beaseley, and *before they were ripe* he," etc.

And again: —

"Mr. Hammond is fortunately settled in our neighborhood, for the present at least; and he has the neatest little cottage in the world, standing, too, under a very tall oak, which bends kindly over it, looking like the Princess

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Glumdalclitch inclining her ear to the box which contained her pet Gulliver."

Mrs. Kirkland's personal manner is an echo of her literary one. She is frank, cordial, yet sufficiently dignified — even bold, yet especially ladylike; converses with remarkable accuracy as well as fluency; is brilliantly witty, and now and then not a little sarcastic, but a general amiability prevails.

She is rather above the medium height; eyes and hair dark; features somewhat small, with no marked characteristics, but the whole countenance beams with benevolence and intellect.

PROSPER M. WETMORE

GENERAL WETMORE occupied some years ago quite a conspicuous position among the *littérateurs* of New York city. His name was seen very frequently in the "Mirror" and in other similar journals, in connection with brief poems and occasional prose compositions. His only publication in volume form, I believe, is "The Battle of Lexington and other Poems," a collection of considerable merit, and one which met a very cordial reception from the press.

Much of this cordiality, however, is attributable to the personal popularity of the man, to his facility in making acquaintances, and his tact in converting them into unwavering friends.

General Wetmore has an exhaustless fund of vitality. His energy, activity, and indefatigability are proverbial, not less than his peculiar sociability. These qualities give him unusual influence among his fellow-citizens, and have constituted him (as precisely the same traits have constituted his friend General Mor-

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ris) one of a standing committee for the regulation of a certain class of city affairs — such, for instance, as the getting up a complimentary benefit, or a public demonstration of respect for some deceased worthy, or a ball and dinner to Mr. Irving or Mr. Dickens.

Mr. Wetmore is not only a General, but Naval Officer of the Port of New York, Member of the Board of Trade, one of the Council of the Art Union, one of the Corresponding Committee of the Historical Society, and of more other committees than I can just now remember. His manners are *recherchés*, courteous — a little in the old-school way. He is sensitive, punctilious; speaks well, roundly, fluently, plausibly, and is skilled in pouring oil upon the waters of stormy debate.

He is, perhaps, fifty years of age, but has a youthful look; is about five feet eight in height, slender, neat, with an air of military compactness; looks especially well on horseback.

EMMA C. EMBURY

MRS. EMBURY is one of the most noted, and certainly one of the most meritorious of our female *littérateurs*. She has been many years before the public, her earliest compositions, I believe, having been contributed to the "New York Mirror" under the *nom de plume* "Ianthe." They attracted very general attention at the time of their appearance and materially aided the paper. They were subsequently, with some other pieces, published in volume form, with the title "Guido and other Poems." The book has been long out of print. Of late days its author has written but little poetry; that little, however, has

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at least indicated a poetic capacity of no common order.

Yet as a poetess she is comparatively unknown, her reputation in this regard having been quite overshadowed by that which she has acquired as a writer of tales. In this latter capacity she has, upon the whole, no equal among her sex in America — certainly no superior. She is not so vigorous as Mrs. Stephens, nor so vivacious as Miss Chubbuck, nor so caustic as Miss Leslie, nor so dignified as Miss Sedgwick, nor so graceful, fanciful, and spirituelle as Mrs. Osgood, but is deficient in none of the qualities for which these ladies are noted, and in certain particulars surpasses them all. Her subjects are fresh, if not always vividly original, and she manages them with more skill than is usually exhibited by our magazinists. She has also much imagination and sensibility, while her style is pure, earnest, and devoid of verbiage and exaggeration. I make a point of reading all tales to which I see the name of Mrs. Embury appended. The story by which she has attained most reputation is "Constance Latimer, the Blind Girl."

Mrs. Embury is a daughter of Doctor Manly, an eminent physician of New York city. At an early age she married a gentleman of some wealth and of education, as well as of tastes akin to her own. She is noted for her domestic virtues no less than for literary talents and acquirements.

She is about the medium height; complexion, eyes, and hair, light; arched eyebrows; Grecian nose; the mouth a fine one, and indicative of firmness; the whole countenance pleasing, intellectual, and expressive. The portrait in "Graham's Magazine" for January, 1843, has no resemblance to her whatever.

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EPES SARGENT

MR. SARGENT is well known to the public as the author of "Velasco, a Tragedy," "The Light of the Light-house, with other Poems," one or two short novelettes, and numerous contributions to the periodicals. He was also the editor of "Sargent's Magazine," a monthly work, which had the misfortune of falling between two stools, never having been able to make up its mind whether to be popular with the three or dignified with the five dollar journals. It was a "happy medium" between the two classes, and met the fate of all happy *media* in dying, as well through lack of foes as of friends. *In medio tutissimus ibis* is the worst advice in the world for the editor of a magazine. Its observance proved the downfall of Mr. Lowell and his really meritorious "Pioneer."

"Velasco" has received some words of commendation from the author of "Ion," and, I am ashamed to say, owes most of its home appreciation to this circumstance. Mr. Talfourd's play has, itself, little truly dramatic, with much picturesque and more poetical value; its author, nevertheless, is better entitled to respect as a dramatist than as a critic of dramas. "Velasco," compared with American tragedies generally, is a good tragedy — indeed, an excellent one; but, positively considered, its merits are very inconsiderable. It has many of the traits of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion," to which, in its mode of construction, its scenic effects, and several other points, it bears as close a resemblance as, in the nature of things, it could very well bear. It is by no means improbable, however, that Mrs. Mowatt received some assistance

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from Mr. Sargent in the composition of her comedy, or at least was guided by his advice in many particulars of technicality.

"Shells and Sea Weeds," a series of brief poems, recording the incidents of a voyage to Cuba, is, I think, the best work in verse of its author, and evinces a fine fancy, with keen appreciation of the beautiful in natural scenery. Mr. Sargent is fond of sea-pieces, and paints them with skill, flooding them with that warmth and geniality which are their character and their due. "A Life on the Ocean Wave" has attained great popularity, but is by no means so good as the less lyrical compositions, "A Calm," "The Gale," "Tropical Weather," and "A Night Storm at Sea."

"The Light of the Light-house" is a spirited poem, with many musical and fanciful passages, well expressed. For example: —

> "But, oh, Aurora's crimson light,
> That makes the watch-fire dim,
> Is not a more transporting sight
> Than Ellen is to him.
> He pineth not for fields and brooks,
> Wild flowers and singing birds,
> For summer smileth in her looks
> And singeth in her words."

There is something of the Dibdin spirit throughout the poem, and, indeed, throughout all the sea poems of Mr. Sargent — a little too much of it, perhaps.

His prose is not quite so meritorious as his poetry. He writes "easily," and is apt at burlesque and sarcasm — both rather broad than original. Mr. Sargent has an excellent memory for good hits, and no little dexterity in their application. To those who meddle little with books, some of his satirical papers must

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appear brilliant. In a word, he is one of the most prominent members of a very extensive American family — the men of industry, talent, and tact.

In stature he is short — not more than five feet five — but well proportioned. His face is a fine one; the features regular and expressive. His demeanor is very gentlemanly. Unmarried, and about thirty years of age.

V

FRANCES SARGENT OSGOOD

MRS. OSGOOD, for the last three or four years, has been rapidly attaining distinction; and this, evidently, with no effort at attaining it. She seems, in fact, to have no object in view beyond that of giving voice to the fancies or the feelings of the moment. "Necessity," says the proverb, "is the mother of Invention;" and the invention of Mrs. Osgood, at least, springs plainly from necessity — from the necessity of invention. *Not* to write poetry — not to act it, think it, dream it, and be it, is entirely out of her power.

It may be questioned whether with more industry, more method, more definite purpose, more ambition, Mrs. Osgood would have made a more decided impression on the public mind. She might, upon the whole, have written better poems; but the chances are that she would have failed in conveying so vivid and so just an idea of her powers as a poet. The warm *abandonnement* of her style — that charm which now so captivates — is but a portion and a consequence of her unworldly nature, of her disregard of mere fame; but it affords us glimpses, which we could not otherwise have obtained, of a capacity for accom-

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plishing what she has not accomplished, and in all probability never will. In the world of poetry, however, there is already more than enough of uncongenial ambition and pretence.

Mrs. Osgood has taken no care whatever of her literary fame. A great number of her finest compositions, both in verse and prose, have been written anonymously, and are now lying *perdus* about the country, in out-of-the-way nooks and corners. Many a goodly reputation has been reared upon a far more unstable basis than her unclaimed and uncollected "fugitive pieces."

Her first volume, I believe, was published, seven or eight years ago, by Edward Churton, of London, during the residence of the poetess in that city. I have now lying before me a second edition of it, dated 1842, a beautifully printed book, dedicated to the Reverend Hobard Caunter. It contains a number of what the Bostonians call "juvenile" poems, written when Mrs. Osgood (then Miss Locke) could not have been more than thirteen, and evincing unusual precocity. The leading piece is "Elfrida, a Dramatic Poem," but in many respects well entitled to the appellation, "Drama." I allude chiefly to the passionate expression of particular portions, to delineation of character, and to occasional scenic effect; in construction, or plot, in general conduct and plausibility, the play fails; comparatively, of course, for the hand of genius is evinced throughout.

The story is the well-known one of Edgar, Elfrida, and Earl Athelwood. The king, hearing of Elfrida's extraordinary beauty, commissions his favorite, Athelwood, to visit her and ascertain if report speaks truly of her charms. The earl, becoming himself enamoured,

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represents the lady as anything but beautiful or agreeable. The king is satisfied. Athelwood soon afterward woos and weds Elfrida — giving Edgar to understand that the heiress's wealth is the object. The true state of the case, however, is betrayed by an enemy; and the monarch resolves to visit the earl at his castle and to judge for himself. Hearing of this resolve, Athelwood, in despair, confesses to his wife his duplicity, and entreats her to render null as far as possible the effect of her charms by dressing with unusual plainness. This the wife promises to do; but, fired with ambition and resentment at the wrong done her, arrays herself in her most magnificent and becoming costume. The king is charmed, and the result is the destruction of Athelwood and the elevation of Elfrida to the throne.

These incidents are well adapted to dramatic purposes, and with more of that art which Mrs. Osgood does not possess, she might have woven them into a tragedy which the world would not willingly let die. As it is, she has merely succeeded in showing what she might, should, and could have done, and yet, unhappily, did not.

The character of Elfrida is the bright point of the play. Her beauty and consciousness of it, her indignation and uncompromising ambition, are depicted with power. There is a fine blending of the poetry of passion and the passion of poetry in the lines which follow: —

> "Why even now he bends
> In courtly reverence to some mincing dame,
> Haply the star of Edgar's festival,
> While I, with this high heart and queenly form,
> Pine in neglect and solitude. Shall it *be*?
> Shall I not rend my fetters and be free?

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Ay! — be the cooing turtle-dove content,
Safe in her own loved nest! the eagle soars
On restless plumes to meet the imperial sun.
And Edgar is my day-star in whose light
This heart's proud wings shall yet be furled to rest.
Why wedded I with Athelwood? For this?
No! even at the altar when I stood —
My hand in his, his gaze upon my cheek —
I did forget his presence and the scene;
A gorgeous vision rose before mine eyes
Of power and pomp and regal pageantry;
A king was at my feet, and, as he knelt,
I smiled, and, turning, met — a husband's kiss.
But still I smiled — for in my guilty soul
I blessed him as the being by whose means
I should be brought within my idol's sphere, —
My haughty, glorious, brave, impassioned Edgar!
Well I remember when these wondering eyes
Beheld him first. I was a maiden then,
A dreaming child — but from that thrilling hour
I've been a queen in visions!"

Very similar, but even more glowing, is the love-inspired eloquence of Edgar.

"*Earth hath no language, love, befitting thee,*
For its own children it hath pliant speech;
And mortals know to call a blossom fair,
A wavelet graceful, and a jewel rich;
But thou! oh, teach me, sweet, the angel tongue
They talked in Heaven ere thou didst leave its bowers
To bloom below!"

To this Elfrida replies: —

"If Athelwood should hear thee!"

And to this, Edgar: —

"Name not the felon knave to me, Elfrida!
My soul is flame whene'er I think of him.
Thou lovest him not? — oh, *say* thou dost not love him!"

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The answer of Elfrida at this point is profoundly true to nature, and would alone suffice to assure any critic of Mrs. Osgood's dramatic talent.

"*When but a child I saw thee in my dreams!*"

The woman's soul here shrinks from the direct avowal of want of love for her husband, and flies to poetry and appeals to fate, by way of excusing that infidelity which is at once her glory and her shame.

In general, the "situations" of "Elfrida" are improbable or ultra-romantic, and its incidents unconsequential, seldom furthering the business of the play, the *dénouement* is feeble, and its moral of very equivocal tendency indeed; but I have already shown that it is the especial office neither of poetry nor of the drama to inculcate truth, unless incidentally. Mrs. Osgood, however, although she has unquestionably failed in writing a good play, has, even in failing, given indication of dramatic power. The great tragic element, passion, breathes in every line of her composition, and had she but the art, or the patience, to model or control it, she might be eminently successful as a playwright. I am justified in these opinions not only by "Elfrida," but by "Woman's Trust, a Dramatic Sketch," included, also, in the English edition.

A Masked Ball. MADELON *and a* STRANGER *in a Recess*

MADELON

Why hast thou led me here?
My friends may deem it strange, unmaidenly,
This lonely converse with an unknown mask.
Yet in thy voice there is a thrilling power
That makes me love to linger. It is like
The tone of one far distant, only his
Was gayer and more soft.

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STRANGER

Sweet Madelon!
Say thou wilt smile upon the passionate love
That thou alone canst waken! Let me hope!

MADELON

Hush! hush! I may not hear thee. Know'st thou not
I am betrothed?

STRANGER

Alas! too well I know;
But I could tell thee such a tale of him —
Thine early love — 't would fire those timid eyes
With lightning pride and anger — curl that lip —
That gentle lip to passionate contempt
For man's light falsehood. Even now he bends —
Thy Rupert bends o'er one as fair as thou,
In fond affection. Even now his heart —

MADELON

Doth my eye flash? doth my lip curl with scorn?
'T is scorn of thee, thou perjured stranger, not —
Oh, not of him, the generous and the true!
Hast thou e'er seen my Rupert? hast thou met
Those proud and fearless eyes that never quailed,
As Falsehood quails, before another's glance —
As thine even now are shrinking from mine own —
The spirit beauty of that open brow,
The noble head, the free and gallant step,
The lofty mien whose majesty is won
From inborn honor — hast thou seen all this?
And darest thou speak of faithlessness and him
In the same idle breath? Thou little know'st
The strong confiding of a woman's heart,
When woman loves as — I do. Speak no more!

STRANGER

Deluded girl! I tell thee he is false —
False as yon fleeting cloud!

MADELON

True as the sun!

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STRANGER

The very wind less wayward than his heart!

MADELON

The forest oak less firm! He loved me not
For the frail rose-hues and the fleeting light
Of youthful loveliness; ah, many a cheek
Of softer bloom, and many a dazzling eye
More rich than mine may win my wanderer's gaze.
He loved me for my love, the deep, the fond —
For my unfaltering truth; he cannot find,
Rove where he will, a heart that beats for him
With such intense, absorbing tenderness,
Such idolizing constancy as mine.
Why should he change, then? — I am still the same.

STRANGER

Sweet infidel! *wilt* thou have ruder proof?
Rememberest thou a little golden case
Thy Rupert wore, in which a gem was shrined?
A gem I would not barter for a world —
An angel face; its *sunny wealth of hair*
In radiant ripples bathed the graceful throat
And dimpled shoulders; round the rosy curve
Of the sweet mouth a smile seemed wandering ever;
While in the depths of azure fire that gleamed
Beneath the drooping lashes slept a world
Of eloquent meaning, passionate yet pure —
Dreamy — subdued — but oh, how beautiful!
A look of timid, pleading tenderness
That should have been a talisman to charm
His restless heart for aye. Rememberest thou?

MADELON (*impatiently*)

I do — I do remember — 't was my own.
He prized it as his life — I gave it him —
What of it? — speak!

STRANGER (*showing a miniature*)

Lady, behold that gift!

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MADELON (*clasping her hands*)

Merciful Heaven! is my Rupert dead?
(*After a pause, during which she seems overwhelmed with agony*)
How died he? — when? — oh, *thou* wast by his side
In that last hour and *I* was far away!
My blessèd love! — give me that token! — speak!
What message sent he to his Madelon?

STRANGER (*supporting her and strongly agitated*)

He is not dead, dear lady! grieve not thus!

MADELON

He is not false, sir stranger!

STRANGER

For thy sake,
Would he were worthier! One other proof
I'll give thee, loveliest! if thou lov'st him still,
I'll not believe thee woman. Listen, then!
A faithful lover breathes not of his bliss
To other ears. Wilt hear a fable, lady?

Here the stranger details some incidents of the first wooing of Madelon by Rupert, and concludes with,

Lady, my task is o'er — dost doubt me still?

MADELON

Doubt thee, my Rupert! ah, I know thee now.
Fling by that hateful mask! — let me unclasp it!
No! thou wouldst *not* betray thy Madelon.

The "Miscellaneous Poems" of the volume — many of them written in childhood — are, of course, various in character and merit. "The Dying Rosebud's Lament," although by no means one of the best, will very well serve to show the earlier and most characteristic manner of the poetess: —

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" Ah me! — ah, woe is me
That I should perish now,
With the dear sunlight just let in
Upon my balmy brow!

" *My leaves, instinct with glowing life,*
Were quivering to unclose;
My happy heart with love was rife —
I was almost a Rose.

" Nerved by a hope, warm, rich, intense,
Already I had risen
Above my cage's curving fence,
My green and graceful prison.

" My pouting lips, by Zephyr pressed,
Were just prepared to part,
And whispered to the wooing wind
The rapture of my heart.

" *In new-born fancies revelling,*
My mossy cell half riven,
Each thrilling leaflet seemed a wing
To bear me into Heaven.

" How oft, while yet *an infant-flower,*
My crimson cheek I've laid
Against the green bars of my bower,
Impatient of the shade;

" *And pressing up, and peeping through*
Its small but precious vistas,
Sighed for the lovely light and dew
That blessed my elder sisters!

" I saw the *sweet breeze rippling* o'er
Their leaves that loved the play,
Though the light thief stole all their store
Of dew-drop gems away.

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"I thought how happy I should be
Such diamond wreaths to wear,
And frolic with a rose's glee
With sunbeam, bird, and air.

"Ah, me! — ah, woe is me, that I,
Ere yet my leaves unclose,
With all my wealth of sweets *must die*
Before I am a rose!"

The poetical reader will agree with me that few things have ever been written (by any poet, at any age) more delicately fanciful than the passages italicised — and yet they are the work of a girl not more than fourteen years of age. The clearness and force of expression, and the nice appositeness of the overt and insinuated meaning, are, when we consider the youth of the writer, even more remarkable than the fancy.

I cannot speak of Mrs. Osgood's poems without a strong propensity to ring the changes upon the indefinite word "grace" and its derivatives. About everything she writes we perceive this indescribable charm — of which, perhaps, the elements are a vivid fancy and a quick sense of the proportionate. Grace, however, may be most satisfactorily defined as "a term applied, in despair, to that class of the impressions of Beauty which admit of no analysis." It is in this irresoluble effect that Mrs. Osgood excels any poetess of her country, and it is to this easily appreciable effect that her popularity is owing. Nor is she more graceful herself than a lover of the graceful, under whatever guise it is presented to her consideration. The sentiment renders itself manifest, in innumerable instances, as well throughout her prose as her poetry. Whatever be her theme, she at once extorts from it its whole

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essentiality of grace. Fanny Ellsler has been often lauded; true poets have sung her praises; but we look in vain for anything written about her, which so distinctly and vividly paints her to the eye as the half-dozen quatrains which follow. They are to be found in the English volume: —

"She comes — the spirit of the dance!
And but for those large eloquent eyes,
Where passion speaks in every glance,
She 'd seem a wanderer from the skies.

"So light that, *gazing breathless there,*
Lest the celestial dream should go,
You 'd think the music in the air
Waved the fair vision to and fro;

"*Or that the melody's sweet flow*
Within the radiant creature played,
And those soft wreathing arms of snow
And white sylph feet the music made.

"Now gliding slow with dreamy grace,
Her eyes beneath their lashes lost,
Now motionless, with lifted face,
And small hands on her bosom crossed.

"*And now with flashing eyes she springs —*
Her whole bright figure raised in air,
As if her soul had spread its wings
And poised her one wild instant there!

"She spoke not — but, so richly fraught
With language are her glance and smile,
That, when the curtain fell, I thought
She had been talking all the while."

This is, indeed, poetry — and of the most unquestionable kind — poetry truthful in the proper sense —

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that is to say, breathing of Nature. There is here nothing forced or artificial — no hardly sustained enthusiasm. The poetess speaks because she feels, and what she feels; but then what she feels is felt only by the truly poetical. The thought in the last line of the quatrain will not be so fully appreciated by the reader as it should be; for latterly it has been imitated, plagiarized, repeated, *ad infinitum;* but the other passages italicised have still left them all their original effect. The idea in the two last lines is exquisitely naïve and natural; that in the two last lines of the second quatrain, beautiful beyond measure; that of the whole fifth quatrain, *magnificent* — unsurpassed in the entire compass of American poetry. It is instinct with the noblest poetical requisite — imagination.

Of the same trait I find, to my surprise, one of the best exemplifications among the "Juvenile Rhymes":

> "For Fancy is a fairy that can hear
> Ever the melody of Nature's voice
> And see all lovely visions that she will.
> She drew *a picture of a beauteous bird*
> *With plumes of radiant green and gold inwoven,*
> *Banished from its beloved resting-place,*
> *And fluttering in vain hope from tree to tree,*
> *And bade us think how, like it, the sweet season*
> *From one bright shelter to another fled;*
> *First from the maple waved her emerald pinions,*
> *But lingered still upon the oak and elm,*
> *Till, frightened by rude breezes even from them,*
> *With mournful sigh she moaned her sad farewell.*"

The little poem called "The Music Box" has been as widely circulated as any of Mrs. Osgood's compositions. The melody and harmony of this *jeu*

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d'esprit are perfect, and there is in it a rich tint of that epigrammatism for which the poetess is noted. Some of the intentional epigrams interspersed through the works are peculiarly happy. Here is one which, while replete with the rarest "spirit of point," is yet something more than pointed.

TO AN ATHEIST POET

"Lov'st thou the music of the sea?
Call'st thou the sunshine bright?
His voice is more than melody —
His smile is more than light."

Here again, is something very similar: —

"Fanny shuts her smiling eyes;
Then because she cannot see,
Thoughtless simpleton, she cries
'Ah! you can't see me.'

"Fanny 's like the sinner vain
Who, with spirit shut and dim,
Thinks, because he sees not Heaven,
Heaven beholds not him."

Is it not a little surprising, however, that a writer capable of so much precision and finish as the author of these epigrams *must* be, should have failed to see how much of force is lost in the inversion of "the sinner vain"? Why not have written "Fanny's like the silly sinner"? — or, if "silly" be thought too jocose, "the blinded sinner"? The rhythm, at the same time, would thus be much improved by bringing the lines,

"Fanny's like the silly sinner,"

"Thinks because he sees not Heaven,"

into *exact* equality.

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In mingled epigrams and *espièglerie* Mrs. Osgood is even more especially at home. I have seldom seen anything in this way more happily done than the song entitled "*If He Can.*"

"The Unexpected Declaration" is, perhaps, even a finer specimen of the same manner. It is one of that class of compositions which Mrs. Osgood has made almost exclusively her own. Had I seen it without her name, I should have had no hesitation in ascribing it to her; for there is no other person — in America certainly — who does anything of a similar kind with anything like a similar piquancy.

The point of this poem, however, might have been sharpened, and the polish increased in lustre, by the application of the emery of brevity. From what the lover says much might well have been omitted; and I should have preferred leaving out altogether the authorial comments; for the story is fully told without them. The "Why do you weep?" "Why do you frown?" and "Why do you smile?" supply all the imagination requires; to supply more than it requires, oppresses and offends it. Nothing more deeply grieves it — or more vexes the true taste in general, than hyperism of any kind. In Germany, *Wohlgeborn* is a loftier title than *Edelgeborn;* and in Greece, the thrice-victorious at the Olympic games could claim a statue of the size of life, while he who had conquered but once was entitled *only* to a colossal one.

The English collection of which I speak was entitled "A Wreath of Wild Flowers from New England." It met with a *really* cordial reception in Great Britain — was favorably noticed by the "Literary Gazette," "Times," "Atlas," "Monthly Chronicle," and especially by the "Court Journal," the "Court and Ladies'

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Magazine," "La Belle Assemblée," and other similar works. "We have long been familiar," says the high authority of the "Literary Gazette," "with the name of our fair author. . . . Our expectations have been fulfilled, and we have here a delightful gathering of the sweetest of wild flowers, all looking as fresh and beautiful as if they had grown in the richest of English pasture in place of having been 'nursed by the cataract.' True, the wreath might have been improved with a little more care — a trifling attention or two paid to the formation of it. A stalk here and there that obtrudes itself between the bells of the flowers, might have become so interwoven as to have been concealed, and the whole have looked as if it had grown in that perfect and beautiful form. Though, after all, we are perhaps too chary; for in Nature every leaf is not ironed out to a form, nor propped up with a wiry precision, but blown and ruffled by the refreshing breezes, and looking as careless and easy and unaffected as a child that bounds along with its silken locks tossed to and fro just as the wind uplifts them. Page after page of this volume have we perused with a feeling of pleasure and admiration." The "Court Journal" more emphatically says: — "Her wreath is one of violets, sweet-scented, pure, and modest; so lovely that the hand that wove it should not neglect additionally to enrich it by turning her love and kindness to things of larger beauty. Some of the smaller lyrics in the volume are *perfectly* beautiful — beautiful in their chaste and exquisite simplicity and the perfect elegance of their composition." In fact, there was *that* about "The Wreath of Wild Flowers" — that inexpressible grace of thought and manner — which never fails to find ready echo in the hearts of the aristocracy

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and refinement of Great Britain; and it was here especially that Mrs. Osgood found welcome. Her husband's merits as an artist had already introduced her into distinguished society (she was petted, in especial, by Mrs. Norton and Rogers), but the publication of her poems had at once an evidently favorable effect upon his fortunes. His pictures were placed in a most advantageous light by her poetical and conversational ability.

Messrs. Clarke and Austin, of New York, have lately issued another, but still a very uncomplete collection of "Poems by Frances S. Osgood." In general, it includes by no means the best of her works. "The Daughter of Herodias"—one of her longest compositions, and a very noble poem, putting me in mind of the best efforts of Mrs. Hemans—is omitted; it is included, however, in the last edition of Doctor Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America." In Messrs. Clarke and Austin's collection there occur, too, very many of those half-sentimental, half-allegorical compositions, of which, at one period, the authoress seemed to be particularly fond, for the reason, perhaps, that they afforded her good opportunity for the exercise of her ingenuity and epigrammatic talent. No poet, however, can admit them to be poetry at all. Still, the volume contains some pieces which enable us to take a new view of the powers of the writer. A few additional years, with their inevitable sorrow, appear to have stirred the depths of her heart. We see less of frivolity, less of vivacity, more of tenderness, earnestness, even passion, and far more of the true imagination as distinguished from its subordinate, fancy. The one prevalent trait, grace, alone distinctly remains. "To the Spirit of Poetry," "To Sibyl," "The Birth of the

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Callitriche," and "The Child and its Angel-Playmate," would do honor to any of our poets. "She Loves Him Yet," nevertheless, will serve, better than either of these poems, to show the alteration of manner referred to. It is not only rhythmically perfect, but it evinces much originality in its structure. The verses commencing, "Yes, lower to the level," are in a somewhat similar tone, but are more noticeable for their terse energy of expression.

In not presenting to the public at one view all that she has written in verse, Mrs. Osgood has incurred the risk of losing that credit to which she is entitled on the score of versatility — of variety in invention and expression. There is scarcely a form of poetical composition in which she has not made experiment; and there is none in which she has not very happily succeeded. Her defects are chiefly negative and by no means numerous. Her versification is sometimes exceedingly good, but more frequently feeble through the use of harsh consonants, and such words as "thou'dst" for "thou wouldst," with other unnecessary contractions, inversions, and obsolete expressions. Her imagery is often mixed; — indeed, it is rarely otherwise. The epigrammatism of her conclusions gives to her poems, as wholes, the air of being more skilfully constructed than they really are. On the other hand, we look in vain throughout her works for an offence against the finer taste, or against decorum — for a low thought or a platitude. A happy refinement — an instinct of the pure and delicate — is one of her most noticeable excellences. She may be properly commended, too, for originality of poetic invention, whether in the conception of a theme or in the manner of treating it. Consequences

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of this trait are her point and piquancy. Fancy and *naïveté* appear in all she writes. Regarding the loftier merits, I am forced to speak of her in more measured terms. She has occasional passages of true imagination — but scarcely the glowing, vigorous, and sustained ideality of Mrs. Maria Brooks, or even, in general, the less ethereal elevation of Mrs. Welby. In that indescribable something, however, which, for want of a more definite term, we are accustomed to call "grace" — that charm so magical, because at once so shadowy and so potent — that Will o' the Wisp which, in its *supreme* development, may be said to involve nearly *all* that is valuable in poetry — she has, unquestionably, no rival among her countrywomen.

Of pure prose — of prose proper — she has, perhaps, never written a line in her life. Her usual magazine papers are a class by themselves. She begins with a resolute effort at being sedate, — that is to say, sufficiently prosaic and matter-of-fact for the purpose of a legend or an essay; but, after a few sentences, we behold uprising the leaven of the Muse; then, with a flourish and some vain attempts at repression, a scrap of verse renders itself manifest; then comes a little poem outright; then another and another and another, with impertinent patches of prose in between, until at length the mask is thrown fairly off and far away, and the whole article — sings.

Upon the whole, I have spoken of Mrs. Osgood so much in detail, less on account of what she has actually done than on account of what I perceive in her the ability to do.

In character she is ardent, sensitive, impulsive — the very soul of truth and honor; a worshipper of the beautiful, with a heart so radically artless as to

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seem abundant in art; universally admired, respected, and beloved. In person, she is about the medium height, slender even to fragility, graceful whether in action or repose; complexion usually pale; hair black and glossy; eyes a clear, luminous gray, large, and with singular capacity for expression.

LYDIA M. CHILD

MRS. CHILD has acquired a just celebrity by many compositions of high merit, the most noticeable of which are "Hobomok," "Philothea," and a "History of the Condition of Women." "Philothea," in especial, is written with great vigor, and, as a classical romance, is not far inferior to the "Anacharsis" of Barthélemy; its style is a model for purity, chastity, and ease. Some of her magazine papers are distinguished for graceful and brilliant imagination — a quality rarely noticed in our countrywomen. She continues to write a great deal for the monthlies and other journals, and invariably writes well. Poetry she has not often attempted, but I make no doubt that in this she would excel. It seems, indeed, the legitimate province of her fervid and fanciful nature. I quote one of her shorter compositions, as well to instance (from the subject) her intense appreciation of genius in others as to exemplify the force of her poetic expression.

MARIUS AMID THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE

"Pillars are fallen at thy feet,
Fanes quiver in the air,
A prostrate city is thy seat,
And thou alone art there.

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"No change comes o'er thy noble brow,
Though ruin is around thee;
Thine eyebeam burns as proudly now
As when the laurel crowned thee.

"It cannot bend thy lofty soul
Though friends and fame depart;
The car of Fate may o 'er thee roll
Nor crush thy Roman heart.

"And genius hath electric power
Which earth can never tame;
Bright suns may scorch and dark clouds lower,
Its flash is still the same.

"The dreams we loved in early life
May melt like mist away;
High thoughts may seem, 'mid passion's strife,
Like Carthage in decay;

"And proud hopes in the human heart
May be to ruin hurled,
Like mouldering monuments of art
Heaped on a sleeping world;

"Yet there is something will not die
Where life hath once been fair;
Some towering thoughts still rear on high,
Some Roman lingers there."

Mrs. Child, casually observed, has nothing particularly striking in her personal appearance. One would pass her in the street a dozen times without notice. She is low in stature and slightly framed. Her complexion is florid; eyes and hair are dark; features in general diminutive. The expression of her countenance, when animated, is highly intellectual. Her dress is usually plain, not even neat — anything but fashionable. Her bearing needs excitement to impress it with life and dignity. She is of that order

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of beings who are themselves only on "great occasions." Her husband is still living. She has no children. I need scarcely add that she has always been distinguished for her energetic and active philanthropy.

ELIZABETH BOGART

MISS BOGART has been for many years before the public as a writer of poems and tales (principally the former) for the periodicals, having made her *début* as a contributor to the original "New York Mirror." Doctor Griswold, in a foot-note appended to one of her poems quoted in his "Poets and Poetry," speaks of the "volume" from which he quotes; but Miss Bogart has not yet collected her writings in volume form. Her fugitive pieces have usually been signed "Estelle." They are noticeable for nerve, dignity, and finish. Perhaps the four stanzas entitled "He came too late," and introduced into Dr. Griswold's volume, are the most favorable specimen of her manner. Had he not quoted them, I should have copied them here.

Miss Bogart is a member of one of the oldest families in the State. An interesting sketch of her progenitors is to be found in Thompson's "History of Long Island." She is about the medium height, straight and slender; black hair and eyes; countenance full of vivacity and intelligence. She converses with fluency and spirit, enunciates distinctly, and exhibits interest in whatever is addressed to her, — a rare quality in good talkers; has a keen appreciation of genius and of natural scenery; is cheerful and fond of society.

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CATHERINE M. SEDGWICK

MISS SEDGWICK is not only one of our most celebrated and most meritorious writers, but attained reputation at a period when American reputation in letters was regarded as a phenomenon; and thus, like Irving, Cooper, Paulding, Bryant, Halleck, and one or two others, she is indebted, certainly, for *some* portion of the esteem in which she was and is held, to that patriotic pride and gratitude to which I have already alluded, and for which we must make reasonable allowance in estimating the absolute merit of our literary pioneers.

Her earliest published work of any length was "A New England Tale," designed in the first place as a religious tract, but expanding itself into a volume of considerable size. Its success — partially owing, perhaps, to the influence of the parties for whom or at whose instigation it was written — encouraged the author to attempt a novel of somewhat greater elaborateness as well as length, and "Redwood" was soon announced, establishing her at once as the first female prose-writer of her country. It was reprinted in England, and translated, I believe, into French and Italian. "Hope Leslie" next appeared — also a novel — and was more favorably received even than its predecessors. Afterwards came "Clarence," not quite so successful, and then "The Linwoods," which took rank in the public esteem with "Hope Leslie." These are all of her longer prose fictions, but she has written numerous shorter ones of great merit, such as "The Rich Poor Man and the Poor Rich Man," "Live and let Live" (both in volume form), with vari-

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ous articles for the magazines and annuals, to which she is still an industrious contributor. About ten years since she published a compilation of several of her fugitive prose pieces, under the title "Tales and Sketches," and a short time ago a series of "Letters from Abroad" — not the least popular or least meritorious of her compositions.

Miss Sedgwick has now and then been nicknamed "the Miss Edgeworth of America;" but she has done nothing to bring down upon her the vengeance of so equivocal a title. That she has thoroughly studied and profoundly admired Miss Edgeworth may, indeed, be gleaned from her works — but what woman has not? Of imitation there is not the slightest perceptible taint. In both authors we observe the same tone of thoughtful morality, but here all resemblance ceases. In the Englishwoman there is far more of a certain Scotch prudence, in the American more of warmth, tenderness, sympathy for the weaknesses of her sex. Miss Edgeworth is the more acute, the more inventive, and the more rigid. Miss Sedgwick is the more womanly.

All her stories are full of interest. The "New England Tale" and "Hope Leslie" are especially so, but upon the whole I am best pleased with "The Linwoods." Its prevailing features are ease, purity of style, pathos, and verisimilitude. To plot it has little pretension. The scene is in America, and, as the sub-title indicates, "Sixty Years Since." This, by the bye, is taken from "Waverley." The adventures of the family of a Mr. Linwood, a resident of New York, form the principal theme. The character of this gentleman is happily drawn, although there is an antagonism between the initial and concluding

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touches — the end has forgotten the beginning, like the government of Trinculo. Mr. Linwood has two children, Herbert and Isabella. Being himself a Tory, the boyish impulses of his son in favor of the revolutionists are watched with anxiety and vexation; and, on the breaking out of the war, Herbert, positively refusing to drink the king's health, is expelled from home by his father — an event on which hinges the main interest of the narrative. Isabella is the heroine proper, full of generous impulses, beautiful, intellectual, spirituelle — indeed, a most fascinating creature. But the family of a Widow Lee throws quite a charm over all the book — a matronly, pious and devoted mother, yielding up her son to the cause of her country — the son gallant, chivalrous, yet thoughtful; a daughter, gentle, loving, melancholy, and susceptible of light impressions. This daughter, Bessie Lee, is one of the most effective personations to be found in our fictitious literature, and may lay claims to the distinction of originality — no slight distinction where *character* is concerned. It is the old story, to be sure, of a meek and trusting heart broken by treachery and abandonment, but in the narration of Miss Sedgwick it breaks upon us with all the freshness of novel emotion. Deserted by her lover, an accomplished and aristocratical coxcomb, the spirits of the gentle girl sink gradually from trust to simple hope, from hope to anxiety, from anxiety to doubt, from doubt to melancholy, and from melancholy to madness. The gradation is depicted in a masterly manner. She escapes from her home in New England and endeavors to make her way alone to New York, with the object of restoring to him who had abandoned her some tokens he had given her

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of his love — an act which her disordered fancy assures her will effect in her own person a disenthralment from passion. Her piety, her madness, and her beauty, stand her in stead of the lion of Una, and she reaches the city in safety. In that portion of the narrative which embodies this journey are some passages which no mind unimbued with the purest spirit of poetry could have conceived, and they have often made me wonder why Miss Sedgwick has never written a poem.

I have already alluded to her usual excellence of style; but she has a very peculiar fault — that of discrepancy between the words and character of the speaker — the fault, indeed, more properly belongs to the depicting of character itself.

For example, at page 38, vol. 1, of "The Linwoods":

"'No more of my contempt for the Yankees, Hal, an thou lovest me,' replied Jasper. 'You remember Æsop's advice to Crœsus at the Persian court?'

"'No, I am sure I do not. You have the most provoking way of resting the lever by which you bring out your own knowledge, on your friend's ignorance.'"

Now all this is pointed (although the last sentence would have been improved by letting the words "on your friend's ignorance" come immediately after "resting"), but it is by no means the language of schoolboys — and such are the speakers.

Again, at page 226, vol. 1, of the same novel: —

"'Now, out on you, you lazy, slavish loons!' cried Rose. 'Cannot you see these men are raised up to fight for freedom for more than themselves? If the chain be broken at one end, the links will fall apart sooner or later. When you see the sun on the mountain top, you may be sure it will shine into the deepest valleys before long.'"

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Who would suppose this graceful eloquence to proceed from the mouth of a negro woman? Yet such is Rose.

Again, at page 24, vol. 1, same novel: —

"'True, I never saw her; but I tell you, young lad, that there is such a thing as seeing the shadow of things far distant and past, and never seeing the realities, though they it be that cast the shadows.'"

Here the speaker is an old woman who, a few sentences before, has been boasting of her proficiency in "*tellin' fortins.*"

I might object, too, very decidedly to the vulgarity of such a phrase as "I put in my oar" (meaning, "I joined in the conversation") when proceeding from the mouth of so well-bred a personage as Miss Isabella Linwood. These are, certainly, most remarkable inadvertences.

As the author of many *books*, of several absolutely bound volumes in the ordinary "novel" form of auld lang syne, Miss Sedgwick has a certain adventitious hold upon the attention of the public, a species of tenure that has nothing to do with literature proper — a very decided advantage, in short, over her more modern rivals whom fashion and the growing influence *of the want* of an international copyright law have condemned to the external insignificance of the yellow-backed pamphleteering.

We must permit, however, neither this advantage, nor the more obvious one of her having been one of our *pioneers*, to bias the critical judgment as it makes estimate of her abilities in comparison with those of her present cotemporaries. She has neither the vigor of Mrs. Stephens nor the vivacious grace of Miss

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Chubbuck, nor the pure style of Mrs. Embury, nor the classic imagination of Mrs. Child, nor the naturalness of Mrs. Annan, nor the thoughtful and suggestive originality of Miss Fuller; but in many of the qualities mentioned she excels, and in no one of them is she particularly deficient. She is an author of marked talent, but by no means of such decided genius as would entitle her to that precedence among our female writers which, under the circumstances to which I have alluded, seems to be yielded her by the voice of the public.

Strictly speaking, Miss Sedgwick is not one of the *literati* of New York city, but she passes here about half or rather more than half her time. Her home is Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Her family is one of the first in America. Her father, Theodore Sedgwick the elder, was an eminent jurist and descended from one of Cromwell's major-generals. Many of her relatives have distinguished themselves in various ways.

She is about the medium height, perhaps a little below it. Her forehead is an unusually fine one; nose of a slightly Roman curve; eyes dark and piercing; mouth well formed and remarkably pleasant in its expression. The portrait in "Graham's Magazine" is by no means a likeness, and, although the hair is represented as curled (Miss Sedgwick at present wears a cap — at least most usually), gives her the air of being much older than she is.

Her manners are those of a high-bred woman, but her ordinary manner vacillates, in a singular way, between cordiality and a reserve amounting to hauteur.

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LEWIS GAYLORD CLARK

MR. CLARK is known principally as the twin brother of the late *Willis* Gaylord Clark, the poet, of Philadelphia, with whom he has often been confounded from similarity both of person and of name. He is known, also, within a more limited circle, as one of the editors of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," and it is in this latter capacity that I must be considered as placing him among literary people. He writes little himself, the editorial scraps which usually appear in fine type at the end of the "Knickerbocker" being the joint composition of a great variety of gentlemen (most of them possessing shrewdness and talent) connected with divers journals about the city of New York. It is only in some such manner, as might be supposed, that so amusing and so heterogeneous a medley of chit-chat could be put together. Were a little more pains taken in elevating the tone of this "Editor's Table" (which its best friends are forced to admit is at present a little Boweryish), I should have no hesitation in commending it in general as a very creditable and very entertaining specimen of what may be termed easy writing and hard reading.

It is not, of course, to be understood from anything I have here said that Mr. Clark does not occasionally contribute editorial matter to the magazine. His compositions, however, are far from numerous, and are always to be distinguished by their style, which is more "easily to be imagined than described." It has its merit, beyond doubt, but I shall not undertake to say that either "vigor," "force," or "impressiveness" is the precise term by which that merit should

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be designated. Mr. Clark once did me the honor to review my poems, and — I forgive him.

The "Knickerbocker" has been long established, and seems to have in it some important elements of success. Its title, for a merely local one, is unquestionably good. Its contributors have usually been men of eminence. Washington Irving was at one period regularly engaged. Paulding, Bryant, Neal, and several others of nearly equal note have also at various times furnished articles, although none of these gentlemen, I believe, continue their communications. In general, the contributed matter has been praiseworthy; the printing, paper, and so forth, have been excellent, and there certainly has been no lack of exertion in the way of what is termed "putting the work before the eye of the public;" still some incomprehensible incubus has seemed always to sit heavily upon it, and it has never succeeded in attaining position among intelligent or educated readers. On account of the manner in which it is necessarily edited, the work is deficient in that absolutely indispensable element, individuality. As the editor has no precise character, the magazine, as a matter of course, can have none. When I say "no precise character," I mean that Mr. Clark, as a literary man, has about him no determinateness, no distinctiveness, no saliency of point; an apple, in fact, or a pumpkin, has more angles. He is as smooth as oil, or a sermon from Doctor Hawks; he is noticeable for nothing in the world except for the markedness by which he is noticeable for nothing.

What is the precise circulation of the "Knickerbocker" at present I am unable to say; it has been variously stated at from eight to eighteen hundred

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subscribers. The former estimate is no doubt too low, and the latter, I presume, is far too high. There are, perhaps, some fifteen hundred copies printed.

At the period of his brother's decease, Mr. Lewis G. Clark bore to him a striking resemblance, but within the last year or two there has been much alteration in the person of the editor of the "Knickerbocker." He is now, perhaps, forty two or three, but still good-looking. His forehead is, phrenologically, bad — round and what is termed "bullety." The mouth, however, is much better, although the smile is too constant and lacks expression; the teeth are white and regular. His hair and whiskers are dark, the latter meeting voluminously beneath the chin. In height Mr. Clark is about five feet ten or eleven, and in the street might be regarded as quite a "personable man;" in society I have never had the pleasure of meeting him. He is married, I believe.

ANNE C. LYNCH

Miss Anne Charlotte Lynch has written little; her compositions are even too few to be collected in volume form. Her prose has been, for the most part, anonymous — critical papers in the "New York Mirror" and elsewhere, with unacknowledged contributions to the annuals, especially "The Gift," and "The Diadem," both of Philadelphia. Her "Diary of a Recluse," published in the former work, is, perhaps, the best specimen of her prose manner and ability. I remember, also, a fair critique on Fanny Kemble's poems; this appeared in the "Democratic Review."

In poetry, however, she has done better, and given evidence of at least unusual talent. Some of her com-

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positions in this way are of merit, and one or two of excellence. In the former class I place her "Bones in the Desert," published in "The Opal" for 1846, her "Farewell to Ole Bull," first printed in the "Tribune," and one or two of her sonnets — not forgetting some graceful and touching lines on the death of Mrs. Willis. In the latter class I place two noble poems, "The Ideal" and "The Ideal Found." These should be considered as one, for each is by itself imperfect. In modulation and vigor of rhythm, in dignity and elevation of sentiment, in metaphorical appositeness and accuracy, and in energy of expression, I really do not know where to point out anything American much superior to them. Their ideality is not so manifest as their passion, but I think it an unusual indication of taste in Miss Lynch, or (more strictly) of an intuitive sense of poetry's true nature, that this passion is just sufficiently subdued to lie within the compass of the poetic art, within the limits of the beautiful. A step farther and it might have passed them. Mere passion, however exciting, prosaically excites; it is in its very essence homely, and delights in homeliness; but the *triumph over* passion, as so finely depicted in the two poems mentioned, is one of the purest and most idealizing manifestations of moral beauty.

In character Miss Lynch is enthusiastic, chivalric, self-sacrificing, "equal to any fate," capable of even martyrdom in whatever should seem to her a holy cause — a most exemplary daughter. She has her hobbies, however (of which a very indefinite idea of "duty" is one), and is, of course, readily imposed upon by any artful person who perceives and takes advantage of this most amiable failing.

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In person she is rather above the usual height, somewhat slender, with dark hair and eyes, the whole countenance at times full of intelligent expression. Her demeanor is dignified, graceful, and noticeable for repose. She goes much into literary society.

VI

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN

MR. CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN has been long known to the public as an author. He commenced his literary career (as is usually the case in America) by writing for the newspapers — for the New York "American" especially, in the editorial conduct of which he became in some manner associated, at a very early age, with Mr. Charles King. His first *book*, I believe, was a collection (entitled "A Winter in the West") of letters published in the "American" during a tour made by their author through the "far West." This work appeared in 1834, went through several editions, was reprinted in London, was very popular, and deserved its popularity. It conveys the natural enthusiasm of a true idealist in the proper phrenological sense, of one sensitively alive to beauty in every development. Its scenic descriptions are vivid, because fresh, genuine, unforced. There is nothing of the cant of the tourist for the sake not of nature, but of *tourism*. The author writes what he feels, and, clearly, because he feels it. The style, as well as that of all Mr. Hoffman's books, is easy, free from superfluities, and, although abundant in broad phrases, still singularly refined, gentlemanly. This ability to speak boldly without blackguardism, to use the tools

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of the rabble when necessary without soiling or roughening the hands with their employment, is a rare and unerring test of the natural in contradistinction from the artificial aristocrat.

Mr. Hoffman's next work was "Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie," very similar to the preceding, but more diversified with anecdote and interspersed with poetry. "Greyslaer" followed, a romance based on the well-known murder of Sharp, the Solicitor-General of Kentucky, by Beauchampe. W. Gilmore Simms (who has far more power, more passion, more movement, more skill than Mr. Hoffman) has treated the same subject more effectively in his novel "Beauchampe;" but the fact is that both gentlemen have positively failed, as might have been expected. That both books are interesting is no merit either of Mr. Hoffman or of Mr. Simms. The real events were more impressive than are the fictitious ones. The facts of this remarkable tragedy, as arranged by actual circumstance, would put to shame the skill of the most consummate artist. Nothing was left to the novelist but the amplification of character, and at this point neither the author of "Greyslaer" nor of "Beauchampe" is especially *au fait*. The incidents might be better woven into a tragedy.

In the way of poetry, Mr. Hoffman has also written a good deal. "The Vigil of Faith and other Poems" is the title of a volume published several years ago. The subject of the leading poem is happy — whether originally conceived by Mr. Hoffman or based on an actual superstition, I cannot say. Two Indian chiefs are rivals in love. The accepted lover is about to be made happy, when his betrothed is murdered by the discarded suitor. The revenge taken is the careful

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preservation of the life of the assassin, under the idea that the meeting the maiden in another world is the point most desired by both the survivors. The incidents interwoven are picturesque, and there are many quotable passages; the descriptive portions are particularly good; but the author has erred, first, in narrating the story in the first person, and secondly, in putting into the mouth of the narrator language and sentiments above the nature of an Indian. I say that the narration should not have been in the first person, because, although an Indian may and does fully experience a thousand delicate shades of sentiment (the whole idea of the story is essentially sentimental), still he has, clearly, no capacity for their various expression. Mr. Hoffman's hero is made to discourse very much after the manner of Rousseau. Nevertheless, "The Vigil of Faith" is, upon the whole, one of our most meritorious poems. The shorter pieces in the collection have been more popular; one or two of the songs particularly so — "Sparkling and Bright," for example, which is admirably adapted to song purposes, and is full of lyric feelings. It cannot be denied, however, that, in general, the whole tone, air, and spirit of Mr. Hoffman's fugitive compositions are echoes of Moore. At times the very words and figures of the "British Anacreon" are unconsciously adopted. Neither can there be any doubt that this obvious similarity, if not positive imitation, is the source of the commendation bestowed upon our poet by the "Dublin University Magazine," which declares him "the best song-writer in America," and does him also the honor to intimate its opinion that "he is a better fellow than the whole Yankee crew" of us taken together — after which there is very little to be said.

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Whatever may be the merits of Mr. Hoffman as a poet, it may be easily seen that these merits have been put in the worst possible light by the indiscriminate and lavish approbation bestowed on them by Dr. Griswold in his "Poets and Poetry of America." The editor can find no blemish in Mr. Hoffman, agrees with everything and copies everything said in his praise — worse than all, gives him more space in the book than any two, or perhaps three, of our poets combined. All this is as much an insult to Mr. Hoffman as to the public, and has done the former irreparable injury — how or why, it is of course unnecessary to say. "Heaven save us from our friends!"

Mr. Hoffman was the original editor of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," and gave it while under his control a tone and character, the weight of which may be best estimated by the consideration that the work thence received an impetus which has sufficed to bear it on alive, although tottering, month after month, through even that dense region of unmitigated and unmitigable fog — that dreary realm of outer darkness, of utter and inconceivable dunderheadism, over which has so long ruled King Log the Second, in the august person of one Lewis Gaylord Clark. Mr. Hoffman subsequently owned and edited the "American Monthly Magazine," one of the best journals we have ever had. He also for one year conducted the "New York Mirror," and has always been a very constant contributor to the periodicals of the day.

He is the brother of Ogden Hoffman. Their father, whose family came to New York from Holland before the time of Peter Stuyvesant, was often brought into

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connection or rivalry with such men as Pinckney, Hamilton, and Burr.

The character of no man is more universally esteemed and admired than that of the subject of this memoir. He has a host of friends, and it is quite impossible that he should have an enemy in the world. He is chivalric to a fault, enthusiastic, frank without discourtesy, an ardent admirer of the beautiful, a gentleman of the best school — a gentleman by birth, by education, and by instinct. His manners are graceful and winning in the extreme — quiet, affable, and dignified, yet cordial and *dégagés*. He converses much, earnestly, accurately, and well. In person he is remarkably handsome. He is about five feet ten in height, somewhat stoutly made. His countenance is a noble one — a full index of the character. The features are somewhat massive but regular. The eyes are blue, or light gray, and full of fire; the mouth finely formed, although the lips have a slight expression of voluptuousness; the forehead, to my surprise, although high, gives no indication, in the region of the temples, of that ideality (or love of the beautiful) which is the distinguishing trait of his moral nature. The hair curls, and is of a dark brown, interspersed with gray. He wears full whiskers. Is about forty years of age. Unmarried.

MARY E. HEWITT

I am not aware that MRS. HEWITT has written any prose; but her poems have been many, and occasionally excellent. A collection of them was published, in an exquisitely tasteful form, by Ticknor and Co., of Boston. The leading piece, entitled "Songs of our

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Land," although the longest, was by no means the most meritorious. In general, these compositions evince poetic fervor, classicism, and keen appreciation both of moral and physical beauty. No one of them, perhaps, can be judiciously commended as a whole; but no one of them is without merit, and there are several which would do credit to any poet in the land. Still, even these latter are particularly rather than generally commendable. They lack unity, totality, ultimate effect, but abound in forcible passages. For example: —

"Shall I portray thee in thy glorious seeming,
Thou that the pharos of my darkness art?"

"Like the blue lotos on its own clear river
Lie thy soft eyes, beloved, upon my soul."

"And there the slave, a slave no more,
Hung reverent up the chain he wore."

"Here 'mid your wild and dark defile
O'erawed and wonder-whelmed I stand,
And ask — 'Is this the fearful vale
That opens on the shadowy land?'"

"Oh friends! we would be treasured still;
Though Time's cold hand should cast
His misty veil, in after years,
Over the idol Past,
Yet send to us some offering thought
O'er Memory's ocean wide,
Pure as the Hindoo's votive lamp
On Ganga's sacred tide."

Mrs. Hewitt has warm partialities for the sea and all that concerns it. Many of her best poems turn upon sea adventures or have reference to a maritime life. Some portions of her "God Bless the Mariner" are naïve and picturesque: *e. g.*: —

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"God bless the hard mariner!
A homely garb wears he,
And he goeth *with a rolling gait,*
Like a ship before the sea.

"He hath piped the loud 'ay, ay, Sir,'
O'er the voices of the main
Till his deep tones have the hoarseness
Of the rising hurricane.

. . . . .

"But oh, a spirit looketh
From out his clear blue eye,
With a truthful childlike earnestness,
Like an angel from the sky.

"A venturous life the sailor leads
Between the sky and sea,
But, when the hour of dread is past,
A merrier who than he?"

The tone of some quatrains, entitled "Alone," differs materially from that usual with Mrs. Hewitt. The idea is happy and well managed.

Mrs. Hewitt's sonnets are upon the whole her most praiseworthy compositions. One entitled "Hercules and Omphale" is noticeable for the vigor of its rhythm: —

"Reclined, enervate, on the couch of ease,
No more he pants for deeds of high emprize;
For Pleasure holds, in soft voluptuous ties
Enthralled, great, Jove-descended Hercules.
The hand that bound the Erymanthean boar,
Hesperia's dragon slew with bold intent,
That from his quivering side in triumph rent
The skin the Cleonæan lion wore,
Holds forth the goblet — while the Lydian queen,
Robed like a nymph, her brow enwreathed with vine,
Lifts high the amphora brimmed with rosy wine,
And pours the draught the crownèd cup within.
And thus the soul, abased to sensual sway,
Its worth forsakes, its might foregoes, for aye."

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The unusual force of the line italicised, will be observed. This force arises first, from the directness, or colloquialism without vulgarity, of its expression (the relative pronoun "which" is very happily omitted between "skin" and "the"); and, secondly, to the musical repetition of the vowel in Cl*eo*n*æ*an," together with the alliterative terminations in "Cleonæ*an*" and "li*on*." The effect, also, is much aided by the sonorous conclusion "wore."

Another and better instance of fine versification occurs in "Forgotten Heroes":—

"And the peasant mother at her door,
To the babe that climbed her knee,
Sang aloud the land's heroic songs,
Sang of Thermopylæ,
Sang of Mycale, of Marathon,
Of proud Platæa's day,
Till the wakened hills from peak to peak
Echoed the glorious lay.
Oh, godlike name! oh, godlike deed!
Song-borne afar on every breeze,
Ye are sounds to thrill like a battle-shout,
Leonidas! Miltiades!"

The general intention here is a line of four iambuses alternating with a line of three; but, less through rhythmical skill than a musical ear, the poetess has been led into some exceedingly happy variations of the theme. For example; — in place of the ordinary iambus as the first foot of the first, of the second, and of the third line, a bastard iambus has been employed. These lines are thus scanned:—

And the peas | ant moth | er at | her door |
4 4 2 2 2

To the babe | that climbed | her knee |
4 4 2 2

Sang aloud | the land's | hero | ic songs |
4 4 2 2 2

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The fourth line,

Sang of | Thermo | pylæ,
2 2 2

is well varied by a trochee, instead of an iambus, in the first foot; and the variation expresses forcibly the enthusiasm excited by the topic of the supposed songs, "Thermopylæ." The fifth line is scanned as the three first. The sixth is the general intention, and consists simply of iambuses. The seventh is like the three first and the fifth. The eighth is like the fourth; and here again the opening trochee is admirably adapted to the movement of the topic. The ninth is the general intention, and is formed of four iambuses. The tenth is an alternating line and yet has four iambuses, instead of the usual three; as has also the final line — an alternating one, too. A fuller volume is in this manner given to the close of the subject; and this volume is fully in keeping with the rising enthusiasm. The last line but one has *two* bastard iambuses, thus: —

Ye are sounds | to thrill | like a bat | the shout | .
4 4 2 4 4 2 ——

Upon the whole, it may be said that the most skilful versifier could not have written lines better suited to the purposes of the poet. The errors of "Alone," however, and of Mrs. Hewitt's poems generally, show that we must regard the beauties pointed out above, merely in the light to which I have already alluded — that is to say, as occasional happiness to which the poetess is led by a musical ear.

I should be doing this lady injustice were I not to mention that, at times, she rises into a higher and purer region of poetry than might be supposed, or inferred, from any of the passages which I have hith-

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erto quoted. The conclusion of her "Ocean Tide to the Rivulet" puts me in mind of the rich spirit of Horne's noble epic, "Orion."

"Sadly the flowers their faded petals close
Where on thy banks they languidly repose,
Waiting in vain to hear thee onward press;
And pale Narcissus by thy margin side
Hath lingered for thy coming, drooped and died,
Pining for thee amid the loneliness.

"Hasten, beloved! — *here! 'neath the o'erhanging rock!*
Hark! from the deep, my anxious hope to mock,
They call me back unto my parent main.
Brighter than Thetis thou — and *ah, more fleet!*
I hear the rushing of thy fair white feet!
Joy! joy! — my breast receives its own again."

The personifications here are well managed. The "Here! — 'neath the o'erhanging rock!" has the high merit of being truthfully, by which I mean *naturally*, expressed, and imparts exceeding vigor to the whole stanza. The idea of the ebb-tide, conveyed in the second line italicised, is one of the happiest imaginable; and too much praise can scarcely be bestowed on the "rushing" of the "fair white feet." The passage altogether is full of fancy, earnestness, and the truest poetic strength. Mrs. Hewitt has given many such indications of a fire which, with more earnest endeavor, might be readily fanned into flame.

In character, she is sincere, fervent, benevolent — sensitive to praise and to blame; in temperament melancholy; in manner subdued; converses earnestly yet quietly. In person she is tall and slender, with black hair and full gray eyes; complexion dark; general expression of the countenance singularly interesting and agreeable.

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RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE

About twelve years ago, I think, the New York "Sun," a daily paper, price one penny, was established in the city of New York by Mr. Moses Y. Beach, who engaged MR. RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE as its editor. In a well-written prospectus, the object of the journal professed to be that of "supplying the public with the news of the day at so cheap a rate as to lie within the means of all." The consequences of the scheme, in their influence on the whole newspaper business of the country, and through this business on the interests of the country at large, are probably beyond all calculation.

Previous to the "Sun," there had been an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a penny paper in New York, and the "Sun" itself was originally projected and for a short time issued by Messrs. Day and Wisner; its establishment, however, is altogether due to Mr. Beach, who purchased it of its disheartened originators. The first decided movement of the journal, nevertheless, is to be attributed to Mr. Locke; and, in so saying, I by no means intend any depreciation of Mr. Beach, since in the engagement of Mr. Locke he had but given one of the earliest instances of that unusual sagacity for which I am inclined to yield him credit.

At all events, the "Sun" was revolving in a comparatively narrow orbit when, one fine day, there appeared in its editorial columns a prefatory article announcing very remarkable astronomical discoveries made at the Cape of Good Hope by Sir John Herschell. The information was said to have been re-

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ceived by the "Sun" from an early copy of the "Edinburgh Journal of Science," in which appeared a communication from Sir John himself. This preparatory announcement took very well (there had been no hoaxes in those days), and was followed by full details of the reputed discoveries, which were now found to have been made chiefly in respect to the moon, and by means of a telescope to which the one lately constructed by the Earl of Rosse is a plaything. As these discoveries were gradually spread before the public, the astonishment of that public grew out of all bounds; but those who questioned the veracity of the "Sun" — the authenticity of the communication to the "Edinburgh Journal of Science" — were really very few indeed; and this I am forced to look upon as a far more wonderful thing than any "man-bat" of them all.

About six months before this occurrence, the Harpers had issued an American edition of Sir John Herschell's "Treatise on Astronomy," and I had been much interested in what is there said respecting the possibility of future lunar investigations. The theme excited my fancy, and I longed to give free rein to it in depicting my day-dreams about the scenery of the moon; in short, I longed to write a story embodying these dreams. The obvious difficulty, of course, was that of accounting for the narrator's acquaintance with the satellite; and the equally obvious mode of surmounting the difficulty was the supposition of an extraordinary telescope. I saw at once that the chief interest of such a narrative must depend upon the reader's yielding his credence in some measure as to details of actual fact. At this stage of my deliberations, I spoke of the design to one or two friends — to Mr.

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John P. Kennedy, the author of "Swallow Barn," among others — and the result of my conversations with them was that the optical difficulties of constructing such a telescope as I conceived were so rigid and so commonly understood that it would be in vain to attempt giving due verisimilitude to any fiction having the telescope as a basis. Reluctantly, therefore, and only half convinced (believing the public, in fact, more readily gullible than did my friends), I gave up the idea of imparting very close verisimilitude to what I should write — that is to say, so close as really to deceive. I fell back upon a style half plausible, half bantering, and resolved to give what interest I could to an actual passage from the earth to the moon, describing the lunar scenery as if surveyed and personally examined by the narrator. In this view I wrote a story which I called "Hans Pfaall," publishing it about six months afterwards in the "Southern Literary Messenger," of which I was then editor.

It was three weeks after the issue of the "Messenger" containing "Hans Pfaall" that the first of the "Moon-hoax" editorials made its appearance in the "Sun," and no sooner had I seen the paper than I understood the jest, which not for a moment could I doubt had been suggested by my own *jeu d'esprit*. Some of the New York journals (the "Transcript" among others) saw the matter in the same light, and published the "Moon Story" side by side with "Hans Pfaall," thinking that the author of the one had been detected in the author of the other. Although the details are, with some exceptions, very dissimilar, still I maintain that the general features of the two compositions are nearly identical. Both are *hoaxes* (although

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one is in a *tone* of mere banter, the other of downright earnest); both hoaxes are on one subject, astronomy; both on the same point of that subject, the moon; both professed to have derived exclusive information from a foreign country, and both attempt to give plausibility by minuteness of scientific detail. Add to all this, that nothing of a similar nature had ever been attempted before these two hoaxes, the one of which followed immediately upon the heels of the other.

Having stated the case, however, in this form, I am bound to do Mr. Locke the justice to say that he denies having seen my article prior to the publication of his own; I am bound to add, also, that I believe him.

Immediately on the completion of the "Moon Story" (it was three or four days in getting finished), I wrote an examination of its claims to credit, showing distinctly its fictitious character, but was astonished at finding that I could obtain few listeners, so really eager were all to be deceived, so magical were the charms of a style that served as the vehicle of an exceedingly clumsy invention.

It may afford even now some amusement to see pointed out those particulars of the hoax which should have sufficed to establish its real character. Indeed, however rich the imagination displayed in this fiction, it wanted much of the force which might have been given it by a more scrupulous attention to general analogy and to fact. That the public were misled, even for an instant, merely proves the gross ignorance which (ten or twelve years ago) was so prevalent on astronomical topics.

The moon's distance from the earth is, in round

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numbers, 240,000 miles. If we wish to ascertain how near, apparently, a lens would bring the satellite (or any distant object), we, of course, have but to divide the distance by the magnifying, or, more strictly, by the space-penetrating power of the glass. Mr. Locke gives his lens a power of 42,000 times. By this divide 240,000 (the moon's real distance), and we have five miles and five-sevenths as the apparent distance. No animal could be seen so far, much less the minute points particularized in the story. Mr. Locke speaks about Sir John Herschell's perceiving flowers (the *papaver Rheas*, etc.) and even detecting the color and the shape of the eyes of small birds. Shortly before, too, the author himself observes that the lens would not render perceptible objects less than eighteen inches in diameter; but even this, as I have said, is giving the glass far too great a power.

On page 18 (of the pamphlet edition), speaking of "a hairy veil" over the eyes of a species of bison, Mr. Locke says — "it immediately occurred to the acute mind of Doctor Herschell that this was a providential contrivance to protect the eyes of the animal from the great extremes of light and darkness, to which all the inhabitants of our side of the moon are periodically subjected." But this should not be thought a very "acute" observation of the Doctor's. The inhabitants of our side of the moon have, evidently, no darkness at all; in the absence of the sun they have a light from the earth equal to that of thirteen full moons, so that there can be nothing of the extremes mentioned.

The topography throughout, even when professing to accord with Blunt's Lunar Chart, is at variance with that and all other lunar charts, and even at variance

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with itself. The points of the compass, too, are in sad confusion; the writer seeming to be unaware that, on a lunar map, these are not in accordance with terrestrial points — the east being to the left, and so forth.

Deceived, perhaps, by the vague titles *Mare Nubium*, *Mare Tranquillitatis*, *Mare Fœcunditatis*, etc., given by astronomers of former times to the dark patches on the moon's surface, Mr. Locke has long details respecting oceans and other large bodies of water in the moon; whereas there is no astronomical point more positively ascertained than that no such bodies exist there. In examining the boundary between light and darkness in a crescent or gibbous moon, where this boundary crosses any of the dark places, the line of division is found to be jagged; but were these dark places liquid, they would evidently be even.

The description of the wings of the man-bat (on page 21) is but a literal copy of Peter Wilkins's account of the wings of his flying islanders. This simple fact should at least have induced suspicion.

On page 23 we read thus — "What a prodigious influence must our thirteen times larger globe have exercised upon this satellite when an embryo in the womb of time, the passive subject of chemical affinity!" Now, this is very fine; but it should be observed that no astronomer could have made such a remark, especially to any "Journal of Science," for the earth in the sense intended (that of bulk) is not only thirteen but forty-nine times *larger* than the moon. A similar objection applies to the five or six concluding pages of the pamphlet, where, by way of introduction to some discoveries in Saturn, the philosophical correspondent is made to give a minute school-boy

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account of that planet — an account quite supererogatory, it might be presumed, in the case of the "Edinburgh Journal of Science."

But there is one point, in especial, which should have instantly betrayed the fiction. Let us imagine the power really possessed of seeing animals on the moon's surface — what in such case would first arrest the attention of an observer from the earth? Certainly neither the shape, size, nor any other peculiarity in these animals so soon as their remarkable *position* — they would seem to be walking heels up and head down, after the fashion of flies on a ceiling. The real observer (however prepared by previous knowledge) would have commented on this odd phenomenon before proceeding to other details; the fictitious observer has not even alluded to the subject, but in the case of the man-bats speaks of seeing their entire bodies, when it is demonstrable that he could have seen little more than the apparently flat hemisphere of the head.

I may as well observe, in conclusion, that the size, and especially the powers of the man-bats (for example, their ability to fly in so rare an atmosphere — if, indeed, the moon has any), with most of the other fancies in regard to animal and vegetable existence, are at variance generally with all analogical reasoning on these themes, and that analogy here will often amount to the most positive demonstration. The temperature of the moon, for instance, is rather above that of boiling water, and Mr. Locke, consequently, has committed a serious oversight in not representing his man-bats, his bisons, his game of all kinds — to say nothing of his vegetables — as each and all done to a turn.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add, that all the suggestions attributed to Brewster and Herschell in the

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beginning of the hoax, about the "transfusion of artificial light through the focal object of vision," etc., etc., belong to that species of figurative writing which comes most properly under the head of rigmarole. There is a real and very definite limit to optical discovery among the stars, a limit whose nature need only be stated to be understood. If, indeed, the casting of large lenses were all that is required, the ingenuity of man would ultimately prove equal to the task, and we might have them of any size demanded;[1] but, unhappily, in proportion to the increase of size in the lens, and consequently of space-penetrating power, is the diminution of light from the object by diffusion of the rays. And for this evil there is no remedy within human reach; for an object is seen by means of that light alone, whether direct or reflected, which proceeds from the object itself. Thus the only artificial light which could avail Mr. Locke would be such as he should be able to throw, not upon "the focal object of vision," but upon the moon. It has been easily calculated that when the light proceeding from a heavenly body becomes so diffused as to be as weak as the natural light given out by the stars collectively in a clear, moonless night, then the heavenly body for any practical purpose is no longer visible.

The singular blunders to which I have referred being properly understood, we shall have all the better reason for wonder at the prodigious *success* of the hoax. Not one person in ten discredited it, and (strangest

[1] Neither of the Herschells dreamed of the possibility of a speculum six feet in diameter, and now the marvel has been triumphantly accomplished by Lord Rosse. There is, in fact, no physical *impossibility* in our casting lenses of even fifty feet diameter or more. A sufficiency of means and *skill* is all that is demanded.

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point of all!) the doubters were chiefly those who doubted without being able to say why — the ignorant, those uninformed in astronomy, people who *would not* believe because the thing was so novel, so entirely "out of the usual way." A grave professor of mathematics in a Virginian college told me seriously that he had *no doubt* of the truth of the whole affair! The great effect wrought upon the public mind is referable, first, to the novelty of the idea; secondly, to the fancy-exciting and reason-repressing character of the alleged discoveries; thirdly, to the consummate tact with which the deception was brought forth; fourthly, to the exquisite *vraisemblance* of the narration. The hoax was circulated to an immense extent, was translated into various languages — was even made the subject of (quizzical) discussion in astronomical societies; drew down upon itself the grave denunciation of Dick, and was, upon the whole, decidedly the greatest hit in the way of sensation — of merely popular sensation — ever made by any similar fiction either in America or in Europe.

Having read the "Moon Story" to an end, and found it anticipative of all the main points of my "Hans Pfaall," I suffered the latter to remain unfinished. The chief design in carrying my hero to the moon was to afford him an opportunity of describing the lunar scenery, but I found that he could add very little to the minute and authentic account of Sir John Herschell. The first part of "Hans Pfaall," occupying about eighteen pages of the "Messenger," embraced merely a journal of the passage between the two orbs, and a few words of general observation on the most obvious features of the satellite; the second part will most probably never appear. I did not think

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it advisable even to bring my voyager back to his parent earth. He remains where I left him, and is still, I believe, "the man in the moon."

From the epoch of the hoax the "Sun" shone with unmitigated splendor. The start thus given the paper insured it a triumph; it has now a daily circulation of not far from fifty thousand copies, and is, therefore, probably, the most really influential journal of its kind in the world. Its success firmly established "the penny system" throughout the country, and (*through* the "Sun") consequently, we are indebted to the genius of Mr. Locke for one of the most important steps ever yet taken in the pathway of human progress.

On dissolving, about a year afterwards, his connection with Mr. Beach, Mr. Locke established a political daily paper, the "New Era," conducting it with distinguished ability. In this journal he made, very unwisely, an attempt at a second hoax, giving the *finale* of the adventures of Mungo Park in Africa — the writer pretending to have come into possession, by some accident, of the lost manuscripts of the traveller. No one, however, seemed to be deceived (Mr. Locke's columns were a suspected district), and the adventures were never brought to an end. They were richly imaginative.

The next point made by their author was the getting up a book on magnetism as the *primum mobile* of the universe, in connection with Doctor Sherwood, the practitioner of magnetic remedies. The more immediate purpose of the treatise was the setting forth a new magnetic method of obtaining the longitude. The matter was brought before Congress and received with favorable attention. What definite action was had I know not. A review of the work appeared in the

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"Army and Navy Chronicle," and made sad havoc of the whole project. It was enabled to do this, however, by attacking in detail the accuracy of some calculations of no very radical importance. These and others Mr. Locke is now engaged in carefully revising; and my own opinion is that his theory (which he has reached more by dint of imagination than of anything else) will finally be established, although, perhaps, never thoroughly by *him*.

His prose style is noticeable for its concision, luminousness, completeness — each quality in its proper place. He has that *method* so generally characteristic of genius proper. Everything he writes is a model in its peculiar way, serving just the purposes intended and nothing to spare. He has written some poetry, which, through certain radical misapprehensions, is not very good.

Like most men of true imagination, Mr. Locke is a seemingly paradoxical compound of coolness and excitability.

He is about five feet seven inches in height, symmetrically formed; there is an air of distinction about his whole person — the *air noble* of genius. His face is strongly pitted by the small-pox, and, perhaps from the same cause, there is a marked obliquity in the eyes; a certain calm, clear *luminousness*, however, about these latter amply compensates for the defect, and the forehead is truly beautiful in its intellectuality. I am acquainted with no person possessing so fine a forehead as Mr. Locke. He is married, and about forty-five years of age, although no one would suppose him to be more than thirty-eight. He is a lineal descendant from the immortal author of the "Essay on the Human Understanding."

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II

MINOR CONTEMPORARIES

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MINOR CONTEMPORARIES

MR. GRISWOLD AND THE POETS

THAT we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad, that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corollary, of the old dogma that the calculating faculties are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may be demonstrated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The highest order of the imaginative intellect is always preëminently mathematical; and the converse.

The idiosyncrasy of our political position has stimulated into early action whatever practical talent we possessed. Even in our national infancy we evinced a degree of utilitarian ability which put to shame the mature skill of our forefathers. While yet in leading-strings we proved ourselves adepts in all the arts and sciences which promote the *comfort* of the animal man. But the arena of exertion, and of consequent distinction, into which our first and most obvious wants impelled us, has been regarded as the field of our deliberate choice. Our necessities have been mis-

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taken for our propensities. Having been forced to make railroads, it has been deemed impossible that we should make verse. Because it suited us to construct an engine in the first instance, it has been denied that we could compose an epic in the second. Because we were not all Homers in the beginning, it has been somewhat too rashly taken for granted that we shall be all Jeremy Benthams to the end.

But this is the purest insanity. The principles of the poetic sentiment lie deep within the immortal nature of man, and have little necessary reference to the worldly circumstances which surround him. The poet in Arcady is, in Kamschatka, the poet still. The self-same Saxon current animates the British and the American heart; nor can any social, or political, or moral, or physical conditions do more than momentarily repress the impulses which glow in our own bosoms as fervently as in those of our progenitors.

Those who have taken most careful note of our literature for the last ten or twelve years will be most willing to admit that we are a poetical people; and in no respect is the fact more plainly evinced than in the eagerness with which books, professing to compile or select from the productions of our native bards, are received and appreciated by the public. Such books meet with success, at least with sale, at periods when the general market for literary wares is in a state of stagnation; and even the ill taste displayed in some of them has not sufficed to condemn.

The "Specimens of American Poetry," by Kettell; the "Common-place Book of American Poetry," by Cheever; a Selection by General Morris; another by Mr. Bryant; the "Poets of America," by Mr. Keese — all these have been widely disseminated and well

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received. In some measure, to be sure, we must regard their success as an affair of personalities. Each individual, honored with a niche in the compiler's memory, is naturally anxious to possess a copy of the book so honoring him; and this anxiety will extend, in some cases, to ten or twenty of the immediate friends of the complimented; while, on the other hand, purchasers will arise, in no small number, from among a very different class, a class animated by very different feelings. I mean the omitted — the large body of those who, supposing themselves entitled to mention, have yet been unmentioned. These buy the unfortunate book as a matter of course, for the purpose of abusing it with a clear conscience and at leisure. But holding these deductions in view, we are still warranted in believing that the demand for works of the kind in question is to be attributed, mainly, to the general interest of the subject discussed. The public have been desirous of obtaining a more distinct view of our poetical literature than the scattered effusions of our bards and the random criticisms of our periodicals could afford. But, hitherto, nothing has been accomplished in the way of supplying the desideratum. The "Specimens" of Kettell were specimens of nothing but the ignorance and ill taste of the compiler. A large proportion of what he gave to the world as American poetry, to the exclusion of much that was really so, was the doggerel composition of individuals unheard of and undreamed of except by Mr. Kettell himself. Mr. Cheever's book did not belie its title, and was excessively "Common-place." The selection by General Morris was in so far good that it accomplished its object to the full extent. This object looked to nothing more than single, brief ex-

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tracts from the writings of every one in the country who had established even the slightest reputation as a poet. The extracts, so far as our truer poets were concerned, were tastefully made; but the proverbial kind feeling of the General seduced him into the admission of an inordinate quantity of the purest twattle. It was gravely declared that we had more than two hundred poets in the land. The compilation of Mr. Bryant, from whom much was expected, proved a source of mortification to his friends, and of astonishment and disappointment to all; merely showing that a poet is, necessarily, neither a critical nor an impartial judge of poetry. Mr. Keese succeeded much better. He brought to his task, if not the most rigorous impartiality, at least a fine taste, a sound judgment, and a more thorough acquaintance with our poetical literature than had distinguished either of his predecessors.

Much, however, remained to be done; and here it may be right to inquire — "What should be the aim of every compilation of the character now discussed?" The object in general terms may be stated as the conveying within moderate compass a distinct view of our poetry and of our poets. This, in fact, is the demand of the public. A book is required, which shall not so much be the reflection of the compiler's peculiar views and opinions upon poetry in the abstract, as of the popular judgment upon such poetical works as have come immediately within its observation. It is not the author's business to insist upon his own theory, and, in its support, to rake up from the byways of the country the "inglorious Miltons" who may, possibly, there abound; neither, because ill according with this theory, is it his duty to dethrone and

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reject those who have long maintained supremacy in the estimation of the people. In this view, it will be seen that regard must be paid to the mere *quantity* of a writer's effusions. He who has published much is not to be omitted because, in the opinion of the compiler, he has written nothing fit for publication. On the other hand, he who has extemporized a single song, which has met the eye of no one but our bibliographer, is not to be set forth among the poetical magnates, even although the one song itself be esteemed equal to the very best of Béranger.

Of the two classes of sins, the negative and the positive, those of omission and those of commission — obvious ones of the former class are, beyond doubt, the more unpardonable. It is better to introduce half a dozen "great unknowns" than to give the "cut direct" to a single individual who has been fairly acknowledged as known. The public, in short, seem to demand *such a compendium of our poetical literature as shall embrace specimens from those works alone, of our recognized poets, which, either through accident, or by dint of merit, have been most particularly the subjects of public discussion.* We wish this, that we may be put in condition to decide for ourselves upon the justice or injustice of the reputation attained. In critical opinion much diversity exists; and, although there is one true and tenable critical opinion, there are still a thousand upon all topics, which, being only the shadows, have all the outlines and assume all the movements of the substance of truth. Thus any critic who should exclude from the compendium all which tallied not with his individual ideas of the Muse would be found to exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of that which

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the public at large, embracing *all* varieties of opinion, has been accustomed to acknowledge as poesy.

These remarks apply only to the admission or rejection of poetical specimens. The public being put fairly in possession of the matter debated, with the provisions above mentioned, the analysis of individual claims, so far as the specimens extend, is not only not unbecoming in the compiler, but a thing to be expected and desired. To this department of his work he should bring analytical ability; a distinct impression of the nature, the principles, and the aims of poetry; a thorough contempt for all prejudice at war with principle; a poetic sense of the poetic; sagacity in the detection and audacity in the exposure of demerit; in a word, talent and faith; the lofty honor which places mere courtesy beneath its feet; the boldness to praise an enemy and the more unusual courage to damn a friend.

It is, in fact, by the criticism of the work that the public voice will, in the end, decide upon its merits. In proportion to the ability or incapacity here displayed, will it, sooner or later, be approved or condemned. Nevertheless, the mere *compilation* is a point, perhaps, of greater importance. With the meagre published aids existing previously to Mr. Griswold's book, the labor of such an undertaking must have been great; and not less great the industry and general information in respect to our literary affairs, which have enabled him so successfully to prosecute it.

The work before us is indeed so vast an improvement upon those of a similar character which have preceded it, that we do its author some wrong in classing all together. Having explained, somewhat

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minutely, our views of the proper mode of compilation, and of the general aims of the species of book in question, it but remains to say that these views have been very nearly fulfilled in "The Poets and Poetry of America," while altogether unsatisfied by the earlier publications.

The volume opens with a preface, which, with some little supererogation, is addressed "To the Reader;" inducing very naturally the query, whether the whole book is not addressed to the same individual. In this preface, which is remarkably well written and strictly to the purpose, the author thus evinces a just comprehension of the nature and objects of true poesy: —

"He who looks on Lake George, or sees the sun rise on Mackinaw, or listens to the grand music of a storm, is divested, certainly for a time, of a portion of the alloy of his nature. The elements of power in all sublime sights and heavenly harmonies should live in the poet's song, to which they can be transferred only by him who possesses the creative faculty. The sense of beauty, next to the miraculous divine suasion, is the means through which the human character is purified and elevated. *The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, 'in words that move in metrical array,' is poetry.*"

The italics are our own; and we quote the passage because it embodies the *sole true* definition of what has been a thousand times erroneously defined.

The earliest specimens of poetry presented in the body of the work are from the writings of Philip Freneau, "one of those worthies who, both with lyre and sword, aided in the achievement of our independence." But, in a volume professing to treat, generally, of the "Poets and Poetry of America," some mention

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of those who versified before Freneau would, of course, be considered desirable. Mr. Griswold has included, therefore, most of our earlier votaries of the Muse, with many specimens of their powers, in an exceedingly valuable "Historical Introduction;" his design being to exhibit as well "the progress as the condition of poetry in the United States."

The basis of the compilation is formed of short biographical and critical notices, with selections from the works of, in all, eighty-seven authors, chronologically arranged. In an appendix at the end of the volume are included specimens from the works of sixty, whose compositions have either been too few, or in the editor's opinion too mediocre, to entitle them to more particular notice. To each of these specimens are appended foot-notes, conveying a brief biographical summary, without anything of critical disquisition.

Of the general plan and execution of the work we have already expressed the fullest approbation. We know no one in America who could, or *who would*, have performed the task here undertaken, at once so well in accordance with the judgment of the critical, and so much to the satisfaction of the public. The labors, the embarrassments, the great difficulties of the achievement are not easily estimated by those before the scenes.

In saying that, individually, we disagree with many of the opinions expressed by Mr. Griswold, we are merely suggesting what, in itself, would have been obvious without the suggestion. It rarely happens that any two persons thoroughly agree upon any one point. It would be mere madness to imagine that any two could coincide in every point of a case where exists

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a multiplicity of opinions upon a multiplicity of points. There is no one who, reading the volume before us, will not, in a thousand instances, be tempted to throw it aside, because its prejudices and partialities are, in a thousand instances, altogether at war with his own. But when so tempted, he should bear in mind that, had the work been that of Aristarchus himself, the discrepancies of opinion would still have startled him and vexed him as now.

We disagree, then, with Mr. Griswold in *many* of his critical estimates; although, in general, we are proud to find his decisions our own. He has omitted from the body of his book some one or two whom we should have been tempted to introduce. On the other hand, he has scarcely made us amends by introducing some one or two dozen whom we should have treated with contempt. We might complain too of a prepossession, evidently unperceived by himself, for the writers of New England. We might hint also that in two or three cases he has rendered himself liable to the charge of personal partiality; it is often so *very* difficult a thing to keep separate in the mind's eye our conceptions of the poetry of a friend from our impressions of his good fellowship and our recollections of the flavor of his wine.

But having said thus much in the way of fault-finding, we have said all. The book should be regarded as *the most important addition which our literature has for many years received.* It fills a void which should have been long ago supplied. It is written with judgment, with dignity and candor. Steering with a dexterity not to be sufficiently admired, between the Scylla of Prejudice on the one hand, and the Charybdis of Conscience on the other, Mr. Griswold,

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in "The Poets and Poetry of America," has entitled himself to the thanks of his countrymen, while showing himself a man of taste, talent, and tact.

THE FEMALE POETS OF AMERICA is a large volume, to match "The Poets and Poetry of America," "The Prose Authors of America," and "The Poets and Poetry of England," — all of which have been eminently and justly successful. These works have indisputable claims upon public attention as critical summaries, at least, of literary merit and demerit. Their great and most obvious value, as affording data or material for criticism — as mere collections of the best specimens in each department and as records of fact, in relation not more to books than to their authors — has in some measure overshadowed the more important merit of the series; for these works have often, and in fact very generally, the positive merits of discriminative criticism, and of honesty — *always* the more negative merit of strong common-sense. The best of the series is, beyond all question, "The Prose Authors of America." This is a book of which any critic in the country might well have been proud, without reference to the mere industry and research manifested in its compilation. These are truly remarkable; but the vigor of comment and force of style are not less so; while more independence and self-reliance are manifested than in any other of the series. There is not a weak paper in the book; and some of the articles are able in all respects. The truth is that Mr. Griswold's intellect is more at home in prose than poetry. He is a better judge of fact than of fancy; not that he has not shown himself quite competent to the task undertaken in "The Poets

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and Poetry of America," or of England, or in the work now especially before us. In this latter, he has done no less credit to himself than to the numerous lady-poets whom he discusses — and many of whom he now first introduces to the public. We are glad, for Mr. Griswold's sake, as well as for the interests of our literature generally, to perceive that he has been at the pains of doing what Northern critics seem to be at great pains *never* to do — that is to say, he has been at the trouble of doing justice, in great measure, to several poetesses who have not had the good fortune to be born in the North. The notices of the Misses Cary, of the Misses Fuller, of the sisters Mrs. Warfield and Mrs. Lee, of Mrs. Nichols, of Mrs. Welby, and of Miss Susan Archer Talley, reflect credit upon Mr. Griswold, and show him to be a man not more of taste than — shall we say it? — of courage. Let our readers be assured that (as matters are managed among the four or five different cliques who control our whole literature in controlling the larger portion of our critical journals) it requires no small amount of courage, in an author whose subsistence lies in his pen, to hint, even, that anything good in a literary way can by any possibility exist out of the limits of a certain narrow territory. We repeat that Mr. Griswold deserves our thanks, under such circumstances, for the cordiality with which he has recognized the poetical claims of the ladies mentioned above. He has not, however, done one or two of them that full justice which ere long the public will take upon itself the task of rendering them. We allude especially to the case of Miss Talley. Mr. Griswold praises her highly; and we would admit that it would be expecting of him too much, just at present, to hope for his

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avowing, of Miss Talley, what *we* think of her, and what one of our best-known critics has distinctly avowed — that she ranks already with the best of American poetesses, and in time will surpass them all, — that her demerits are those of inexperience and excessive sensibility (betraying her, unconsciously, into imitation), while her merits are those of unmistakable genius. We are proud to be able to say, moreover, in respect to another of the ladies referred to above, that one of her poems is decidedly the noblest poem in the collection, although the most distinguished poetesses in the land have here included their most praiseworthy compositions. Our allusion is to Miss Alice Cary's "Pictures of Memory." Let our readers see it and judge for themselves. We speak deliberately; in all the higher elements of poetry, in true imagination, in the power of exciting the only real poetical effect — elevation of *the soul* in contradistinction from mere excitement of the intellect or heart, the poem in question is the noblest in the book.

"The Female Poets of America" includes ninety-five names, commencing with Ann Bradstreet, the contemporary of the once world-renowned Du Bartas — him of the "nonsense-verses," the poet who was in the habit of styling the sun the "Grand Duke of Candles" — and ending with "Helen Irving," a *nom de plume* of Miss Anna H. Phillips. Mr. Griswold gives most space to Mrs. Maria Brooks (*Maria del Occidente*), *not*, we hope and believe, merely because Southey has happened to commend her. The claims of this lady we have not yet examined so thoroughly as we could wish, and we will speak more fully of her hereafter, perhaps. In point of actual merit — that is

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to say, of actual accomplishment, without reference to mere indications of the ability to accomplish — we would rank the first dozen or so in this order (leaving out Mrs. Brooks for the present). Mrs. Osgood — *very decidedly first* — then Mrs. Welby, Miss Cary (or the Misses Cary), Miss Talley, Mrs. Whitman, Miss Lynch, Miss Frances Fuller, Miss Lucy Hooper, Mrs. Oakes Smith, Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Hewitt, Miss Clarke, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. Warfield, (with her sister, Mrs. Lee), Mrs. Eames, and Mrs. Sigourney. If Miss Lynch had as much imagination as energy of expression and artistic power, we would place her next to Mrs. Osgood. The most *skilful merely*, of those just mentioned, are Mrs. Osgood, Miss Lynch, and Mrs. Sigourney. The most imaginative are Miss Cary, Mrs. Osgood, Miss Talley, and Miss Fuller. The most accomplished are Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Eames, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Whitman, and Mrs. Oakes Smith. The most popular are Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Oakes Smith, and Miss Hooper.

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RUFUS DAWES

"As a poet," says Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," "the standing of MR. DAWES is as yet unsettled; there being a wide difference of opinion respecting his writings." The *width* of this difference is apparent; and, while to many it is matter for wonder, to those who have the interest of our literature at heart, it is, more properly, a source of mortification and regret. That the author in question has long enjoyed what we term "a high poetical reputation" cannot be denied; and in no manner is this point more strikingly evinced than in the choice of his works, some two years since, by one of our most enterprising publishers, as the initial volume of a series, the avowed object of which was the setting forth in the best array of paper, type, and pictorial embellishment the *élite* of the American poets. As a writer of occasional stanzas he has been long before the public; always eliciting, from a great variety of sources, unqualified commendation. With the exception of a solitary remark, adventured by ourselves in "A Chapter on Autography," there has been no written dissent from the universal opinion in his favor — the universal *apparent* opinion. Mr. Griswold's observation must be understood, we presume, as referring to the conversational opinion upon this topic; or it is not impossible that he holds in view the difference between the criticism of the newspaper paragraphs and the private comment of the educated and intelligent. Be this as it may, the rapidly growing "rep-

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utation" of our poet was much enhanced by the publication of his first compositions "of length," and attained its climax, we believe, upon the public recitation, by himself, of a tragic drama, in five acts, entitled "Athenia of Damascus," to a large assembly of admiring and applauding friends, gathered together for the occasion in one of the halls of the University of New York.

This popular decision, so frequent and so public, in regard to the poetical ability of Mr. Dawes, might be received as evidence of his actual merit (and by thousands it is so received) were it not too scandalously at variance with a species of criticism which *will not* be resisted — with the perfectly simple precepts of the very commonest common-sense. The peculiarity of Mr. Griswold's observation has induced us to make inquiry into the true character of the volume to which we have before alluded, and which embraces, we believe, the chief portion of the published verse-compositions of its author. This inquiry has but resulted in the confirmation of our previous opinion; and we now hesitate not to say, that no man in America has been more shamefully over-estimated than the one who forms the subject of this article. We say shamefully; for, though a better day is now dawning upon our literary interests and a laudation so indiscriminate will never be sanctioned again, the laudation in this instance, as it stands upon record, must be regarded as a laughable although bitter satire upon the general zeal, accuracy, and independence of that critical spirit which but a few years ago pervaded and degraded the land.

In what we shall say we have no intention of being profound. Here is a case in which anything like

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analysis would be utterly thrown away. Our purpose (which is truth) will be more fully answered by an unvarnished exposition of fact. It appears to us, indeed, that in excessive generalization lies one of the leading errors of a criticism employed upon a poetical literature so immature as our own. We rhapsodize rather than discriminate; delighting more in the dictation or discussion of a principle than in its particular and methodical application. The wildest and most erratic effusion of the Muse, not utterly worthless, will be found more or less indebted to method for whatever of value it embodies; and we shall discover, conversely, that, in any analysis of even the wildest effusion, we labor without method only to labor without end. There is little reason for that vagueness of comment which, of late, we so pertinaciously affect, and which has been brought into fashion, no doubt, through the proverbial facility and security of merely general remark. In regard to the leading principles of true poesy, these, we think, stand not at all in need of the elucidation hourly wasted upon them. Founded in the unerring instincts of our nature, they are enduring and immutable. In a rigid scrutiny of any number of directly conflicting opinions upon a poetical topic, we will not fail to perceive that principles identical in every important point have been, in each opinion, either asserted, or intimated, or unwittingly allowed an influence. The differences of decision arose simply from those of application; and, from such variety in the applied rather than in the conceived idea, sprang, undoubtedly, the absurd distinctions of the "schools."

"Geraldine" is the title of the first and longest poem in the volume before us. It embraces some

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three hundred and fifty stanzas — the whole being a most servile imitation of the "Don Juan" of Lord Byron. The outrageous absurdity of the systematic digression in the British original was so managed as to form not a little portion of its infinite interest and humor; and the fine discrimination of the writer pointed out to him a limit beyond which he never ventured with this tantalizing species of drollery. "Geraldine" may be regarded, however, as a simple embodiment of the whole soul of digression. It is a mere mass of irrelevancy, amid the mad farrago of which we detect with difficulty even the faintest vestige of a narrative, and where the continuous lapse from impertinence to impertinence is seldom justified by any shadow of appositeness or even of the commonest relation.

To afford the reader any proper conception of the story, is of course a matter of difficulty; we must content ourselves with a mere outline of the general conduct. This we shall endeavor to give without indulgence in those feelings of risibility stirred up in us by the primitive perusal. We shall rigorously avoid every species of exaggeration, and confine ourselves, with perfect honesty, to the conveyance of a distinct image.

"Geraldine," then, opens with some four or five stanzas descriptive of a sylvan scene in America. We could, perhaps, render Mr. Dawes's poetical reputation no greater service than by the quotation of these simple verses in full: —

"I know a spot where poets fain would dwell,
To gather flowers and food for after-thought,
As bees draw honey from the rose's cell
To hive among the treasures they have wrought;

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And there a cottage from a sylvan screen
Sent up a curling smoke amidst the green.

" Around that hermit home of quietude
The elm-trees whispered with the summer air,
And nothing ever ventured to intrude
But happy birds that carolled wildly there,
Or honey-laden harvesters that flew
Humming away to drink the morning dew.

" Around the door the honey-suckle climbed
And Multa-flora spread her countless roses,
And never poet sang nor minstrel rhymed
Romantic scene where happiness reposes
Sweeter to sense than that enchanting dell
Where home-sick memory fondly loves to dwell.

" Beneath the mountain's brow the cottage stood,
Hard by a shelving lake whose pebbled bed
Was skirted by the drapery of a wood
That hung its festoon foliage overhead,
Where wild deer came at eve unharmed, to drink,
While moonlight threw their shadows from the brink.

" The green earth heaved her giant waves around,
Where, through the mountain vista, one vast height
Towered heavenward, without peer, his forehead bound
With gorgeous clouds, at times of changeful light,
While, far below, the lake in bridal rest
Slept with his glorious picture on her breast."

Here is an air of quietude in good keeping with the theme; the " giant waves " in the last stanzas redeem it from much exception otherwise; and perhaps we need say nothing at all of the suspicious-looking compound " Mult*a*-flora." Had Mr. Dawes always written even nearly so well, we should have been spared today the painful task imposed upon us by a stern sense of our critical duty. These passages are followed immediately by an address or invocation to " Peer-

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less America," including apostrophes to Allston and Claude Lorraine.

We now learn the name of the tenant of the cottage, which is Wilton, and ascertain that he has an only daughter. A single stanza quoted at this juncture will aid the reader's conception of the queer tone of philosophical rhapsody with which the poem teems, and some specimen of which is invariably made to follow each little modicum of incident: —

> " How like the heart is to an instrument
> A touch can wake to gladness or to woe!
> How like the circumambient element
> The spirit with its undulating flow!
> The heart — the soul — O Mother Nature, why
> This universal bond of sympathy?"

After two pages much in this manner, we are told that Geraldine is the name of the maiden, and are informed, with comparatively little circumlocution, of her character. She is beautiful, and kind-hearted, and somewhat romantic, and "some thought her reason touched" — for which we have little disposition to blame them. There is now much about Kant and Fichte; about Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin (which latter is made to rhyme with *gang*); about Milton, Byron, Homer, Spinoza, David Hume, and Mirabeau; and a good deal, too, about the *scribendi cacoëthes*, in which an evident misunderstanding of the quantity of *cacoëthes* brings, again, into very disagreeable suspicion the writer's cognizance of the Latin tongue. At this point, we may refer, also, to such absurdities as

> " Truth with her thousand-folded robe of error
> Close shut in her *sarcophagi* of terror — "

and

> " Where *candelabri* silver the white halls."

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Now, no one is presupposed to be cognizant of any language beyond his own; to be ignorant of Latin is no crime; to pretend a knowledge is beneath contempt; and the pretender will attempt in vain to utter or to write two consecutive phrases of a foreign idiom, without betraying his deficiency to those who are conversant.

At page 39, there is some prospect of a progress in the story. Here we are introduced to a Mr. Acus and his fair daughter, Miss Alice: —

> " Acus had been a dashing Bond-street tailor
> Some few short years before, who took his measures
> So carefully he always cut the jailor
> And filled his coffers with exhaustless treasures;
> Then with his wife, a son, and three fair daughters,
> He sunk the goose and straightway crossed the waters."

His residence is in the immediate vicinity of Wilton. The daughter, Miss Alice, who is said to be quite a belle, is enamoured of one Waldron, a foreigner, a lion, and a gentleman of questionable reputation. His character (which for our life and soul we cannot comprehend) is given within the space of some forty or fifty stanzas, made to include at the same time an essay on motives, deduced from the text " whatever is, must be " and illuminated by a long note at the end of the poem, wherein the *systime* (query, *Système?*) *de la Nature* is sturdily attacked. Let us speak the truth: this note (and the whole of them, for there are many) may be regarded as a glorious specimen of the concentrated essence of rigmarole, and, to say nothing of their utter absurdity *per se*, are so ludicrously uncalled for, and grotesquely out of place, that we found it impossible to refrain, during their perusal, from a most unbecoming and uproarious guffaw. We will

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be pardoned for giving a specimen — selecting it for its brevity: —

> "Reason, he deemed, could measure everything,
> And reason told him that there was a law
> Of mental action which must ever fling
> A death-bolt at all faith, and this he saw
> Was Transference.[14]"

Turning to Note 14, we read thus: —

"If any one has a curiosity to look into this subject [does Mr. Dawes *really* think any one so great a fool?], and wishes to see how far the force of reasoning and analysis may carry him, independently of revelation, I would suggest [thank you, sir] such inquiries as the following: —

"Whether the first Philosophy, considered in relation to Physics, was first in time?

"How far our moral perceptions have been influenced by natural phenomena?

"How far our metaphysical notions of cause and effect are attributable to the transference of notions connected with logical language?"

And all this in a poem about Acus, a tailor!

Waldron prefers, unhappily, Geraldine to Alice, and Geraldine returns his love, exciting thus the deep indignation of the neglected fair one, —

> "whom love and jealousy bear up
> To mingle poison in her rival's cup."

Miss Alice has among her adorers one of the genus loafer, whose appellation, not improperly, is Bore. Bore is acquainted with a milliner — the milliner of the disconsolate lady: —

> "She made this milliner her friend, who swore,
> To work her full revenge through Mr. Bore."

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And now says the poet, —

> " I leave your sympathetic fancies,
> To fill the outline of this pencil sketch."

This filling has been, with us at least, a matter of no little difficulty. We believe, however, that the affair is intended to run thus: — Waldron is enticed to some vile sins by Bore, and the knowledge of these, on the part of Alice, places the former gentleman in her power.

We are now introduced to a *fête champêtre* at the residence of Acus, who, by the way, has a son, Clifford, a suitor to Geraldine with the approbation of her father — that good old gentleman, for whom our sympathies were excited in the beginning of things, being influenced by the consideration that this scion of the house of the tailor will inherit a plum. The worst of the whole is, however, that the romantic Geraldine, who should have known better, and who loves Waldron, loves also the young knight of the shears. The consequence is a rencontre of the rival suitors at the *fête champêtre*, Waldron knocking his antagonist on the head, and throwing him into the lake. The murderer, as well as we can make out the narrative, now joins a piratical band, among whom he alternately cuts throats and sings songs of his own composition. In the mean time the deserted Geraldine mourns alone, till, upon a certain day, —

> " A shape stood by her like a thing of air —
> She started — Waldron's haggard face was there.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> " He laid her gently down, of sense bereft,
> And sunk his picture on her bosom's snow,
> And close beside these lines in blood he left:
> ' Farewell forever, Geraldine, I go

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Another woman's victim — dare I tell?
'T is Alice! — curse us, Geraldine! — farewell!'"

There is no possibility of denying the fact: this *is* a droll piece of business. The lover brings forth a miniature (Mr. Dawes has a passion for miniatures), *sinks* it in the bosom of the lady, cuts his finger, and writes with the blood an epistle (*where* is not specified, but we presume he indites it upon the bosom as it is "close beside" the picture), in which epistle he announces that he is "another woman's victim," giving us to understand that he himself is a woman after all, and concluding with the delicious bit of Billingsgate:

"'dare I tell?
'T is Alice! — curse us, Geraldine! — farewell!'"

We suppose, however, that "curse us" is a misprint; for why should Geraldine curse both herself and her lover? — it should have been "curse it!" no doubt. The whole passage, perhaps, would have read better thus —

oh, my eye!
'T is Alice! — d—n it, Geraldine! — good-by!

The remainder of the narrative may be briefly summed up. Waldron returns to his professional engagements with the pirates, while Geraldine, attended by her father, goes to sea for the benefit of her health. The consequence is inevitable. The vessels of the separated lovers meet and engage in the most diabolical of conflicts. Both are blown all to pieces. In a boat from one vessel Waldron escapes — in a boat from the other the lady Geraldine. Now, as a second natural consequence, the parties meet again — Destiny is everything in such cases. Well, the parties meet again. The lady Geraldine has "that miniature"

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about her neck, and the circumstance proves too much for the excited state of mind of Mr. Waldron. He just seizes her ladyship, therefore, by the small of the waist and incontinently leaps with her into the sea.

However intolerably absurd this skeleton of the story may appear, a thorough perusal will convince the reader that the entire fabric is even more so. It is impossible to convey, in any such digest as we have given, a full idea of the *niaiseries* with which the narrative abounds. An utter want of *keeping* is especially manifest throughout. In the most solemnly serious passages we have, for example, incidents of the world of 1839 jumbled up with the distorted mythology of the Greeks. Our conclusion of the drama, as we just gave it, was perhaps ludicrous enough; but how much more preposterous does it appear in the grave language of the poet himself! —

> "And round her neck the miniature was hung
> Of him who gazed with Hell's unmingled woe;
> He saw her, kissed her cheek, and wildly flung
> His arms around her with a mad'ning throw —
> Then plunged within the cold unfathomed deep
> While sirens sang their victim to his sleep!"

Only think of a group of *sirens* singing to sleep a modern "miniatured" flirt, kicking about in the water with a New York dandy in tight pantaloons!

But not even these stupidities would suffice to justify a total condemnation of the poetry of Mr. Dawes. We have known follies very similar committed by men of real ability, and have been induced to disregard them in earnest admiration of the brilliancy of the minor beauty of style. Simplicity, perspicuity, and vigor, or a well-disciplined ornateness of language, have

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done wonders for the reputation of many a writer really deficient in the higher and more essential qualities of the Muse. But upon these minor points of manner our poet has not even the shadow of a shadow to sustain him. His works, in this respect, may be regarded as a theatrical world of mere verbiage, somewhat speciously bedizened with a tinselly meaning well adapted to the eyes of the rabble. There is not a page of anything that he has written which will bear, for an instant, the scrutiny of a critical eye. Exceedingly fond of the glitter of metaphor, he has not the capacity to manage it, and, in the awkward attempt, jumbles together the most incongruous of ornament. Let us take any passage of "Geraldine" by way of exemplification: —

> "Thy rivers swell the sea —
> In one eternal diapason pour
> Thy cataracts the hymn of liberty,
> Teaching the clouds to thunder."

Here we have cataracts teaching clouds to thunder — and how? By means of a hymn.

> "Why should chromatic discord charm the ear
> And smiles and tears stream o'er with troubled joy?"

Tears may stream over, but not smiles.

> "Then comes the breathing time of young Romance,
> The June of life, when summer's earliest ray
> Warms the red arteries, that bound and dance
> With soft voluptuous impulses at play,
> While the full heart sends forth as from a hive
> A thousand wingèd messengers alive."

Let us reduce this to a simple statement, and we have — what? The earliest ray of summer warming red arteries, which are bounding and dancing, and play-

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ing with a parcel of urchins, called voluptuous impulses, while the bee-hive of a heart attached to these dancing arteries is at the same time sending forth a swarm of its innocent little inhabitants.

> "The eyes were like the sapphire of deep air,
> The garb that distance robes Elysium in;
> But oh, so much of heaven lingered there,
> The wayward heart forgot its blissful sin,
> And worshipped all Religion well forbids
> Beneath the silken fringes of their lids."

That *distance* is *not* the cause of the sapphire of the sky, is not to our present purpose. We wish merely to call attention to the verbiage of the stanza. It is impossible to put the latter portion of it into anything like intelligible prose. So much of heaven lingered in the lady's eyes that the wayward heart forgot its blissful sin, and worshipped everything which religion forbids, beneath the silken fringes of the lady's eyelids. This we cannot be compelled to understand, and shall therefore say nothing further about it.

> "She loved to lend Imagination wing
> And link her heart with Juliet's in a dream,
> And feel the music of a sister string
> That thrilled the current of her vital stream."

How delightful a picture we have here! A lady is lending one of her wings to the spirit, or genius, called Imagination, who, of course, has lost one of his own. While thus employed with one hand, with the other she is chaining her heart to the heart of the fair Juliet. At the same time she is feeling the music of a sister string, and this string is thrilling the current of the lady's vital stream. If this is downright nonsense we

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cannot be held responsible for its perpetration; it is but the downright nonsense of Mr. Dawes.

Again:—

> "Without the Palinurus of self-science
> Byron embarked upon the stormy sea,
> To adverse breezes hurling his defiance
> And dashing up the rainbows on his lee,
> And chasing those he made in wildest mirth,
> Or sending back their images to earth."

This stanza we have more than once seen quoted as a fine specimen of the poetical powers of our author. His lordship, no doubt, is herein made to cut a very remarkable figure. Let us imagine him, for one moment, embarked upon a stormy sea, hurling his defiance (literally, throwing his gauntlet or glove) to the adverse breezes, dashing up rainbows on his lee, laughing at them and chasing them at the same time, and, in conclusion, "sending back their images to earth." But we have already wearied the reader with this abominable rigmarole. We shall be pardoned (after the many specimens thus given at random) for not carrying out the design we originally intended: that of commenting upon two or three successive pages of "Geraldine," with a view of showing (in a spirit apparently more fair than that of particular selection) the *entireness* with which the whole poem is pervaded by unintelligibility. To every thinking mind, however, this would seem a work of supererogation. In such matters, by such understandings, the brick of the σχολαστικός will be received implicitly as a sample of the house. The writer capable, to any extent, of such absurdity as we have pointed out, cannot, by any possibility, produce a long article worth reading. We say this in the very teeth of the magnifi-

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cent assembly which listened to the recital of Mr. Dawes, in the great hall of the University of New York. We shall leave "Athenia of Damascus," without comment, to the decision of those who may find time and temper for its perusal, and conclude our extracts by a quotation, from among the minor poems, of the following very respectable

ANACREONTIC

"Fill again the mantling bowl
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking!
None but slaves should bend the soul
Beneath the chains of mortal making!
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

"Mark this cup of rosy wine
With virgin pureness deeply blushing;
Beauty pressed it from the vine
While Love stood by to charm its gushing;
He who dares to drain it now
Shall drink such bliss as seldom gladdens;
The Moslem's dream
Would joyless seem
To him whose brain its rapture maddens.

"Pleasure sparkles on the brim —
Lethe lies far deeper in it —
Both, enticing, wait for him
Whose heart is warm enough to win it;
Hearts like ours, if e'er they chill
Soon with love again must lighten.
Skies may wear
A darksome air
Where sunshine most is known to brighten.

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"Then fill, fill high the mantling bowl!
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking!
Care shall never cloud the soul
While Beauty's beaming eyes are waking.
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And care may bring her clouds to-morrow."

Whatever shall be, hereafter, the position of Mr. Dawes in the poetical world, he will be indebted for it altogether to his shorter compositions, some of which have the merit of tenderness; others of melody and force. What seems to be the popular opinion in respect to his more voluminous effusions has been brought about, in some measure, by a certain general *tact*, nearly amounting to taste, and more nearly the converse of talent. This tact has been especially displayed in the choice of not inelegant titles and other externals; in a peculiar imitative speciousness of manner, pervading the surface of his writings; and (here we have the anomaly of a positive benefit deduced from a radical defect) in an absolute deficiency in basis, in stamen, in matter, or pungency, which, if even slightly evinced, might have invited the reader to an intimate and understanding perusal, whose result would have been disgust. His poems have not been condemned, only because they have never been read. The glitter upon the surface has sufficed, with the newspaper critic, to justify his hyperboles of praise. Very few persons, we feel assured, have had sufficient nerve to wade through the entire volume now in question, except, as in our own case, with the single object of criticism in view. Mr. Dawes has, also, been aided to a poetical reputation by the amia-

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bility of his character as a man. How efficient such causes have before been in producing such effects, is a point but too thoroughly understood.

We have already spoken of the numerous *friends* of the poet; and we shall not here insist upon the fact, that *we* bear him no personal ill-will. With those who know us, such a declaration would appear supererogatory; and by those who know us not, it would, doubtless, be received with incredulity. What we have said, however, is not in opposition to Mr. Dawes, nor even so much in opposition to the poems of Mr. Dawes, as in defence of the many true souls which, in Mr. Dawes's apotheosis, are aggrieved. The laudation of the unworthy is to the worthy the most bitter of all wrong. But it is unbecoming in him who merely demonstrates a truth, to offer reason or apology for the demonstration.

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FLACCUS — THOMAS WARD

THE poet now comprehended in the *cognomen* FLACCUS is by no means our ancient friend Quintus Horatius, nor even his ghost, but merely a Mr. —— Ward, of Gotham, once a contributor to the New York "American" and to the New York "Knickerbocker Magazine." He is characterized by Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," as a gentleman of elegant leisure.

What there is in "elegant leisure" so much at war with the divine afflatus, it is not very difficult, but quite unnecessary, to say. The fact has been long apparent. Never sing the Nine so well as when penniless. The *mens divinior* is one thing, and the *otium cum dignitate* quite another.

Of course Mr. Ward is not, as a poet, altogether destitute of merit. If so, the public had been spared these paragraphs. But the sum of his deserts has been footed up by a clique who are in the habit of reckoning units as tens in all cases where champagne and "elegant leisure" are concerned. We do not consider him, at all points, a "Pop Emmons," but, with deference to the more matured opinions of the "Knickerbocker," we may be permitted to entertain a doubt whether he is either Jupiter Tonans or Phœbus Apollo.

Justice is not, at all times, to all persons, the most desirable thing in the world; but then there is the old adage about the tumbling of the heavens, and simple justice is all that we propose in the case of Mr. Ward.

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We have no design to be bitter. We notice his book at all, only because it is an unusually large one of its kind, because it is here lying upon our table, and because, whether justly or unjustly, whether for good reason or for none, it has attracted some portion of the attention of the public.

The volume is entitled, somewhat affectedly, "Passaic, a Group of Poems touching that river: with Other Musings, by Flaccus," and embodies, we believe, all the previously published effusions of its author. It commences with a very pretty "Sonnet to Passaic;" and from the second poem, "Introductory Musings on Rivers," we are happy in being able to quote an entire page of even remarkable beauty: —

"Beautiful Rivers! that adown the vale
With graceful passage journey to the deep,
Let me along your grassy marge recline
At ease, and, musing, meditate the strange
Bright history of your life: yes, from your birth
Has beauty's shadow chased your every step;
The blue sea was your mother, and the sun,
Your glorious sire, clouds your voluptuous cradle,
Roofed with o'erarching rainbows; and your fall
To earth was cheered with shouts of happy birds,
With brightened faces of reviving flowers,
And meadows, while the sympathizing west
Took holiday, and donned her richest robes.
From deep mysterious wanderings your springs
Break bubbling into beauty; where they lie
In infant helplessness awhile, but soon,
Gathering in tiny brooks, they gambol down
The steep sides of the mountain, laughing, shouting,
Teasing the wild flowers, and at every turn
Meeting new playmates still to swell their ranks;
Which, with the rich increase resistless grown,
Shed foam and thunder, that the echoing wood

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Rings with the boisterous glee; while, o'er their heads,
Catching their spirit blithe, young rainbows sport,
The frolic children of the wanton sun.

"Nor is your swelling prime, or green old age,
Though calm, unlovely; still, where'er ye move,
Your train is beauty; trees stand grouping by,
To mark your graceful progress; giddy flowers
And vain, as beauties wont, stoop o'er the verge
To greet their faces in your flattering glass;
The thirsty herd are following at your side;
And water-birds in clustering fleets convoy
Your sea-bound tides; and jaded man, released
From worldly thraldom, here his dwelling plants,
Here pauses in your pleasant neighborhood,
Sure of repose along your tranquil shores;
And, when your end approaches and ye blend
With the eternal ocean, ye shall fade
As placidly as when an infant dies,
And the Death-Angel shall your powers withdraw
Gently as twilight takes the parting day,
And, with a soft and gradual decline
That cheats the senses, lets it down to night."

There is nothing very original in all this; the general idea is, perhaps, the most absolutely trite in poetical literature; but the theme is not the less just on this account, while we must confess that it is admirably handled. The picture embodied in the whole of the concluding paragraph is perfect. The seven final lines convey not only a novel but a highly appropriate and beautiful image.

What follows, of this poem, however, is by no means worthy so fine a beginning. Instead of confining himself to the true poetical thesis, the beauty or the sublimity of river scenery, he descends into mere meteorology — into the uses and general philosophy of rain, etc., matters which should be left to Mr. Espy,

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who knows something about them, as we are sorry to say Mr. Flaccus does not.

The second and chief *poem* in the volume, is entitled "The Great Descender." We emphasize the "poem" merely by way of suggesting that "The Great Descender" is anything else. We never could understand what pleasure men of talent can take in concocting elaborate doggerel of this order. Least of all can we comprehend why, having perpetrated the atrocity, they should place it at the door of the Muse. We are at a loss to know by what right, human or divine, twattle of this character is intruded into a collection of what professes to be *poetry*. We put it to Mr. Ward, in all earnestness, if "The Great Descender," which is a history of Sam Patch, has a single attribute, beyond that of mere versification, in common with what even Sam Patch himself would have had the hardihood to denominate a poem.

Let us call this thing a rhymed *jeu d'esprit*, a burlesque, or what not? — and, even so called and judged by its new name, we must still regard it as a failure. Even in the loosest compositions we demand a certain degree of keeping. But in "The Great Descender" none is apparent. The tone is unsteady, fluctuating between the grave and the gay, and never being precisely either. Thus there is a failure in both. The intention being never rightly taken, we are, of course, never exactly in condition either to weep or to laugh.

We do not pretend to be the Oracle of Dodona, but it does really appear to us that Mr. Flaccus intended the whole matter, in the first instance, as a solemnly serious thing; and that, having composed it in a grave vein, he became apprehensive of its exciting derision, and so interwove sundry touches of the

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burlesque, behind whose equivocal aspect he might shelter himself at need. In no other supposition can we reconcile the spotty appearance of the whole with a belief in the sanity of the author. It is difficult, also, in any other view of the case, to appreciate the air of positive gravity with which he descants upon the advantages to Science which have accrued from a man's making a frog of himself. Mr. Ward is frequently pleased to denominate Mr. Patch "a martyr of science," and appears very doggedly in earnest in all passages such as the following: —

> "Through the glad Heavens, which tempests now conceal,
> Deep thunder-guns in quick succession peal,
> As if salutes were firing from the sky,
> To hail the triumph and the victory.
> Shout! trump of Fame, till thy brass lungs burst out!
> Shout! mortal tongues! deep-throated thunders, shout!
> For lo! electric *genius*, downward hurled,
> Has startled *Science*, and illumed the world!"

That Mr. Patch was a genius we do not doubt; so is Mr. Ward; but the science displayed in jumping down the Falls is a point above us. There might have been some science in jumping *up*.

"The Worth of Beauty; or a Lover's Journal," is the title of the poem next in place and importance. Of this composition Mr. Ward thus speaks in a Note: "The individual to whom the present poem relates, and who had suffered severely all the pains and penalties which arise from the want of those personal charms so much admired by him in others, gave the author many years since some fragments of a journal kept in his early days, in which he had bared his heart and set down all his thoughts and feelings. This prose journal has here been transplanted into the richer soil of verse."

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The narrative of the friend of Mr. Flaccus must, originally, have been a very good thing. By "originally," we mean before it had the misfortune to be "transplanted in the richer soil of verse" — which has by no means agreed with its constitution. But, even through the dense fog of our author's rhythm, we can get an occasional glimpse of its merit. It must have been the work of a heart on fire with passion, and the utter abandon of the details reminds us even of Jean Jacques. But alas for this "richer soil"! *Can* we venture to present our readers with a specimen?

"Now roses blush, and violets' eyes
And seas reflect the glance of skies;
And now *that frolic pencil* streaks
With quaintest tints the tulips' cheeks;
Now jewels bloom in secret worth,
Like blossoms of the inner earth;
Now painted birds are pouring round
The beauty and the wealth of sound;
Now sea-shells glance with quivering ray,
Too rare to seize, too fleet to stay,
And hues out-dazzling all the rest
Are dashed profusely on the west,
While rainbows seem to palettes changed,
Whereon the motley tints are ranged.
But soft the moon *that pencil* tipped,
As though, in liquid radiance dipped,
A likeness of the sun it drew,
But flattered him with pearlier hue,
Which haply spilling runs astray,
And blots with light the Milky Way;
While stars besprinkle all the air,
Like spatterings of *that pencil* there."

All this by way of *exalting* the subject. The moon is made a painter, and the rainbow a palette. And the moon has a pencil (*that* pencil!) which she dips, by

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way of a brush, in the liquid radiance (the colors on a palette are *not* liquid) and then *draws* (not paints) a likeness of the sun; but, in the attempt, plasters him too "pearly," puts it on too thick; the consequence of which is that some of the paint is spilt, and "runs astray" and besmears the Milky Way, and "spatters" the rest of the sky with stars! We can only say that a very singular picture was spoilt in the making.

The versification of "The Worth of Beauty" proceeds much after this fashion; we select a fair example of the whole from page 43: —

> "Yes! pangs have cut my soul with grief
> So keen that gashes were relief,
> And racks have wrung my spirit-frame
> To which the strain of joints were tame,
> And battle strife itself were nought
> Beside the inner fight I 've fought," etc., etc.

Nor do we regard any portion of it (so far as rhythm is concerned) as at all comparable to some of the better ditties of William Slater. Here, for example, from his Psalms, published in 1642: —

> "The righteous shall his sorrow scan
> And laugh at him, and say, 'Behold!
> What hath become of this here man
> That on his riches was so bold?'"

And here, again, are lines from the edition of the same Psalms, by Archbishop Parker, which we most decidedly prefer: —

> "Who sticketh to God in sable trust,
> As Sion's mount he stands full just,
> Which moveth no whit nor yet can reel,
> But standeth forever as stiff as steel."

"The Martyr" and "The Retreat of Seventy-six" are merely Revolutionary incidents "done into verse,"

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and spoilt in the doing. "The Retreat" begins with the remarkable line,

"Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!"

which is elsewhere introduced into the poem. We look in vain here for anything worth even qualified commendation.

"The Diary" is a record of events occurring to the author during a voyage from New York to Havre. Of these events a fit of sea-sickness is the chief. Mr. Ward, we believe, is the first of the *genus irritabile* who has ventured to treat so delicate a subject with that grave dignity which is its due: —

"Rejoice! rejoice! already on my sight
Bright shores, gray towers, and coming wonders reel;
My brain grows giddy — is it with delight?
A swimming faintness, such as one might feel
When stabbed and dying, gathers on my sense —
It weighs me down — and now — help! — horror! —"

But the "horror," and indeed all that ensues, we must leave to the fancy of the poetical.

Some pieces entitled "Humorous" next succeed, and one or two of them (for example, "The Graham System" and "The Bachelor's Lament") are not so *very* contemptible in their way, but the way itself is beneath even contempt.

"To an Infant in Heaven" embodies some striking thoughts, and, although feeble as a whole, and terminating lamely, may be cited as the best composition in the volume. We quote two or three of the opening stanzas: —

"Thou bright and star-like spirit,
That in my visions wild
I see 'mid heaven's seraphic host —
Oh! canst thou be my child?

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"My grief is quenched in wonder,
And pride arrests my sighs;
A branch from this unworthy stock
Now blossoms in the skies.

"Our hopes of thee were lofty,
But have we cause to grieve?
Oh! could our fondest, proudest wish
A nobler fate conceive?

"The little weeper tearless!
The sinner snatched from sin!
The babe to more than manhood grown,
Ere childhood did begin!

"And I, thy earthly teacher,
Would blush thy powers to see!
Thou art to me a parent now,
And I a child to thee!"

There are several other pieces in the book — but it is needless to speak of them in detail. Among them we note one or two poetical effusions, and one or two which are (satirically?) termed satirical. All are worthless.

Mr. Ward's imagery, at detached points, has occasional vigor and appropriateness; we may go so far as to say that, at times, it is strikingly beautiful — by accident of course. Let us cite a few instances. At page 53 we read,

"Oh, happy day! — earth, sky is fair,
And fragrance floats along the air;
For all the bloomy orchards glow
As with a fall of rosy snow."

At page 91,

"How flashed the overloaded flowers
With gems, a present from the showers!"

At page 92,

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"No! there is danger; all the night
I saw her like a starry light
More lovely in my visions lone
Than in my day-dreams' truth she shone.
'T is naught when on the sun we gaze,
If only dazzled by his rays;
But, when our eyes his form retain,
Some wound to vision must remain."

And again, at page 234, speaking of a slight shock of an earthquake, the earth is said to tremble

"As if some wing of passing angel, bound
From sphere to sphere, had brushed the golden chain
That hangs our planet to the throne of God."

This latter passage, however, is, perhaps, not altogether original with Mr. Ward. In a poem now lying before us, entitled "Al Aaraaf," the composition of a gentleman of Philadelphia, we find what follows: —

"A dome by linkèd light from heaven let down
Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
A window of one circular diamond there
Looked out above into the purple air,
And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between the Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing."

But if Mr. Ward's imagery is, indeed, at rare intervals good, it must be granted, on the other hand, that in general it is atrociously inappropriate or low. For example: —

"Thou gaping chasm! whose wide devouring throat
Swallows a river, *while the gulping note*
Of monstrous deglutition gurgles loud," etc.
(*Page* 24.)

"Bright Beauty! child of starry birth,
The grace, the gem, the flower of earth,
The *damask livery* of Heaven!" (*Page* 44.)

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Here the mind wavers between gems, and stars, and taffety — between footmen and flowers. Again, at page 46,

> "All thornless flowers of wit, all chaste
> And delicate essays of taste,
> All playful fancies, wingèd wiles,
> That from their pinions scatter smiles,
> All prompt resource in stress or pain,
> *Leap ready-armed* from woman's brain."

The idea of "thornless flowers," etc., leaping "*ready-armed*" could have entered few brains except those of Mr. Ward.

Of the most ineffable *bad taste* we have instances without number. For example, page 183,

> "And, straining, fastens on her lips a kiss
> That seemed to *suck the life-blood from her heart!*"

And here, very gravely, at page 25,

> "Again he's roused, *first cramming in his cheek*
> *The weed, though vile, that props the nerves when weak.*"

Here again, at page 33,

> "Full well he knew, where food does not refresh,
> The shrivelled soul sinks inward with the flesh —
> That he's best armed for danger's rash career,
> *Who's crammed so full there is no room for fear.*"

But we doubt if the whole world of literature, poetical or prosaic, can afford a picture more utterly *disgusting* than the following, which we quote from page 177: —

> "But most of all good eating cheers the brain,
> Where other joys are rarely met — at sea —
> Unless, indeed, we lose as soon as gain —
> Ay, there's the rub, so baffling oft to me.
> Boiled, roast, and baked — *what precious choice of dishes*
> *My generous throat has shared among the fishes!*

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"'T is sweet to leave, in each forsaken spot,
Our foot-prints there, if only in the sand;
'T is sweet to feel we are not all forgot,
That some will weep our flight from every land;
And sweet the knowledge, when the seas I cross,
My briny messmates! ye will mourn my loss."

This passage alone should damn the book — ay, damn a dozen such.

Of what may be termed the *niaiseries* — the silli-nesses — of the volume, there is no end. Under this head we might quote two thirds of the work. For example: —

"Now lightning, with convulsive spasm
Splits heaven *in many a* fearful chasm."

"*It takes the high trees by the hair*
And, as with *besoms*, sweeps the air."

"Now breaks the gloom and through the *chinks*
The moon, in search of opening, *winks* —"

all seriously urged, at different points of page 66. Again, on the very next page,

"Bees buzzed, and wrens that thronged the rushes
Poured round incessant twittering gushes."

And here, at page 129,

"And now he leads her to the slippery brink
Where ponderous tides headlong plunge down the horrid *chink*."

And here, page 109,

"And, like a ravenous vulture, *peck*
The smoothness of that cheek and neck."

And here, page 111,

"While through the skin worms *wriggling* broke."

And here, page 170,

"And ride the *skittish* backs of untamed waves."

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And here, page 214,

> "Now clasps its mate in holy prayer,
> Or *twangs* a harp of gold."

Mr. Ward, also, is constantly talking about "thunder-guns," "thunder-trumpets," and "thunder-shrieks." He has a bad habit, too, of styling an eye "a weeper," as for example, at page 208,

> "Oh, curl in smiles that mouth again
> And wipe that *weeper* dry."

Somewhere else he calls two tears "two sparklers" — very much in the style of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who was fond of denominating Madeira "the rosy." "In the nick," meaning in the height, or fulness, is likewise a pet expression of the author of "The Great Descender." Speaking of American forests, at page 286, for instance, he says, "let the doubter walk through them in the nick of their glory." A phrase which may be considered as in the very nick of good taste.

We cannot pause to comment upon Mr. Ward's most extraordinary system of versification. *Is* it his own? He has quite an original way of conglomerating consonants, and seems to have been experimenting whether it were not possible to do altogether without vowels. Sometimes he strings together quite a chain of impossibilities. The line, for example, at page 51,

> "Or, only such as sea-shells flash,"

puts us much in mind of the schoolboy stumbling-block, beginning, "The cat ran up the ladder with a lump of raw liver in her mouth," and we defy Sam Patch himself to pronounce it twice in succession without tumbling into a blunder.

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But we are fairly wearied with this absurd theme. *Who* calls Mr. Ward a poet? He is a second-rate, or a third-rate, or perhaps a ninety-ninth-rate, poetaster. He is a gentleman of "elegant leisure," and gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus. Similar opinions, we believe, were expressed by somebody else — was it Mr. Benjamin? — no very long while ago. But neither Mr. Ward nor the "Knickerbocker" would be convinced. The latter, by way of defence, went into a treatise upon Sam Patch, and Mr. Ward, "in the nick of his glory," wrote another poem against criticism in general, in which he called Mr. Benjamin "a wasp" and "an owl," and endeavored to prove him an ass. An owl is a wise bird — especially in spectacles — still, we do not look upon Mr. Benjamin as an owl. If all are owls who disbelieve in this book (which we now throw to the pigs), then the world at large cuts a pretty figure, indeed, and should be burnt up in April, as Mr. Miller desires — for it is only one immense aviary of owls.

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WILLIAM W. LORD

OF MR. LORD we know nothing — although we believe that he is a student at Princeton College — or perhaps a graduate, or perhaps a Professor of that institution. Of his book, lately, we have heard a good deal — that is to say, we have heard it announced in every possible variation of phrase, as "forthcoming." For several months past, indeed, much amusement has been occasioned in the various literary coteries in New York by the pertinacity and obviousness of an attempt made by the poet's friends to get up an anticipatory excitement in his favor. There were multitudinous dark rumors of something *in posse*, whispered insinuations that the sun had at length arisen or would certainly arise, that a book was really in press which would revolutionize the poetical world, that the manuscript had been submitted to the inspection of a junto of critics, whose fiat was well understood to be Fate (Mr. Charles King, if we remember aright, forming one of the junto), that the work had by them been approved and its successful reception and illimitable glorification assured, Mr. Longfellow, in consequence, countermanding an order given his publishers (Redding & Co.) to issue forthwith a new threepenny edition of "The Voices of the Night." Suggestions of this nature, busily circulated in private, were in good time insinuated through the press, until at length the public expectation was as much on tiptoe as public expectation in America can ever be expected

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to be about so small a matter as the issue of a volume of American poems. The climax of this whole effort, however, at forestalling the critical opinion, and by far the most injudicious portion of the procedure, was the publisher's announcement of the forthcoming book as "a very remarkable volume of poems."

The fact is, the only remarkable things about Mr. Lord's compositions are their remarkable conceit, ignorance, impudence, platitude, stupidity, and bombast: — we are sorry to say all this, but there is an old adage about the falling of the heavens. Nor must we be misunderstood. We intend to wrong neither Mr. Lord nor our own conscience, by denying him particular merits — such as they are. His book is not altogether contemptible, although the conduct of his friends has inoculated nine-tenths of the community with the opinion that it is; but what we wish to say is, that "remarkable" is by no means the epithet to be applied in the way of commendation either to anything that he has yet done, or to anything that he may hereafter accomplish. In a word, while he has undoubtedly given proof of a very ordinary species of talent, no man whose opinion is entitled to the slightest respect will admit in him any indication of genius.

The "particular merits" to which, in the case of Mr. Lord, we have allusion, are merely the accidental merits of particular passages. We say "accidental" — because poetical merit which is not simply an accident, is very sure to be found, more or less, in a state of diffusion throughout a poem. No man is entitled to the sacred name of poet, because from one hundred and sixty pages of doggerel may be culled a few sentences of worth. Nor would the case be in any respect

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altered, if these few sentences, or even if a few passages of length, were of an excellence even supreme. For a poet is necessarily a man of genius, and with the spirit of true genius even its veriest commonplaces are intertwined and inextricably intertangled. When, therefore, amid a Sahara of platitude, we discover an occasional Oasis, we must not so far forget ourselves as to fancy any latent fertility in the sands. It is our purpose, however, to do the fullest justice to Mr. Lord, and we proceed at once to cull from his book whatever, in our opinion, will put in the fairest light his poetical pretensions.

And first we extract the one brief passage which aroused in us what we recognized as the Poetical Sentiment. It occurs, at page 94, in "Saint Mary's Gift," which, although excessively unoriginal at all points, is upon the whole the least reprehensible poem of the volume. The heroine of the story having taken a sleeping draught, after the manner of Juliet, is conveyed to a vault (still in the same manner), and (still in the same manner) awakes in the presence of her lover, who comes to gaze on what he supposes her corpse: —

> "And each unto the other was a dream;
> And so they gazed without a stir or breath,
> *Until her head into the golden stream*
> *Of her wide tresses, loosened from their wreath,*
> *Sank back, as she did yield again to death.*"

At page 3, in a composition of much general eloquence, there occur a few lines of which we should not hesitate to speak enthusiastically were we not perfectly aware that Mr. Lord has no claim to their origination: —

> "Ye winds
> That in the impalpable deep caves of air,

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Moving your silent plumes, in dreams of flight,
Tumultuous lie, and from your half-stretched wings
Beat the faint zephyrs that disturb the air!"

At page 6, in the same poem, we meet also a passage of high merit, although sadly disfigured: —

"Thee the bright host of Heaven,
The stars adore: — a thousand altars, fed
By pure unwearied hands, like cressets blaze
In the blue depths of night; nor all unseen
In the pale sky of day, with tempered light
Burn *radiant of thy praise*."

The disfiguration to which we allude lies in the making a blazing altar burn merely like a blazing cresset — a simile about as forcible as would be the likening an apple to a pear, or the sea-foam to the froth on a pitcher of Burton's ale.

At page 7, still in the same poem, we find some verses which are very quotable, and will serve to make our readers understand what we mean by the eloquence of the piece: —

"Great Worshipper! hast thou no thought of Him
Who gave the Sun his brightness, winged the winds,
And on the everlasting deep bestowed
Its voiceless thunder — spread its fields of blue,
And made them glorious *like an inner sky*
From which the islands rise like steadfast clouds,
How beautiful! who gemmed thy zone with stars,
Around thee threw His own cerulean robe, —
And bent His coronal about thy brows,
Shaped of the seven splendors of the light —
Piled up the mountains for thy throne; and thee
The image of His beauty made and power,
And gave thee to be sharer of His state,
His majesty, His glory, and His fear!"

We extract this, not because we like it ourselves, but because we take it for granted that there are

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many who will, and that Mr. Lord himself would desire us to extract it as a specimen of his power. The "Great Worshipper" is Nature. We disapprove, however, the man-milliner method in which she is tricked out, item by item. The "How beautiful!" should be understood, we fancy, as an expression of admiration on the part of Mr. Lord, for the fine idea which immediately precedes — the idea which we have italicised. It is, in fact, by no means destitute of force — but we have met it before.

At page 70, there are two stanzas addressed "To My Sister." The first of these we cite as the best thing of equal length to be found in the book. Its conclusion is particularly noble.

"And shall we meet in heaven, and know and love?
Do human feelings in that world above
Unchanged survive? blest thought! but ah, I fear
That thou, dear sister, in some other sphere,
Distant from mine will [wilt] find a brighter home,
Where I, unworthy found, may never come: —
Or be so high above me glorified,
That I a meaner angel, undescried,
Seeking thine eyes, such love alone shall see
As angels give to all bestowed on me;
And when my voice upon thy ear shall fall,
Hear only such reply as angels give to all."

We give the lines as they are: their grammatical construction is faulty; and the punctuation of the ninth line renders the sense equivocal.

Of that species of composition which comes most appropriately under the head, *Drivel*, we should have no trouble in selecting as many specimens as our readers could desire. We will afflict them with one or two.

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SONG

"O soft is the ringdove's eye of love
When her mate returns from a weary flight;
And brightest of all the stars above
Is the one bright star that leads the night.

"But softer thine eye than the dove's by far,
When of friendship and pity thou speakest to me;
And brighter, O brighter, than eve's one star
When of love, sweet maid, I speak to thee."

Here is another: —

SONG

"Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That never loved before.
Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That heart can love no more.

"As the rose was in the bud, love,
Ere it opened into sight,
As yon star in drumlie daylight
Behind the blue was bright;

"So thine image in my heart, love,
As pure, as bright, as fair
Thyself unseen, unheeded
I saw and loved it there.

"Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee
As heart ne'er loved before;
Oh, a heart, it loves, loves, loves thee,
That heart can love no more."

In "The Widow's Complaint" we are entertained after this fashion: —

"And what are these children
I once thought my own,
What now do they seem
But his orphans alone?"

In "The New Castalia" we have it thus: —

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"Then a pallid beauteous maiden
Golden ghastly robes arrayed in
Such a wondrous strain displayed in,
In a wondrous song of Aidenne,
That all the gods and goddesses
Shook their golden yellow tresses,
Parnassus' self made half afraid in."

Just above this there is something about aged beldames dreaming

"of white throats sweetly jagged
With a ragged butch-knife dull,
And of night-mares neighing, weighing,
On a sleeper's bosom *squatting*."

But in mercy to our readers we forbear.

Mr. Lord is never elevated above the dead level of his habitual platitude by even the happiest thesis in the world. That any man could, at one and the same time, fancy himself a poet and string together as many pitiable inanities as we see here, on so truly suggestive a thesis as that of "a lady taking the veil," is to our apprehension a miracle of miracles. The idea would seem to be, of itself, sufficient to elicit fire from ice, to breathe animation into the most stolid of stone. Mr. Lord winds up a dissertation on the subject by the patronizing advice,

"Ere thou, irrevocable, to that dark creed
Art yielded, *think, O Lady, think again!*"

the whole of which would read better if it were

Ere thou, irrevocable, to this d — d doggrel
Art yielded, Lord, think! think! — ah think again.

Even with the great theme, Niagara, our poet fails in his obvious effort to work himself into a fit of inspiration. One of his poems has for title "A Hymn

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to Niagara," but from beginning to end it is nothing more than a very silly "Hymn to Mr. Lord." Instead of describing the fall (as well as any Mr. Lord could be supposed to describe it) he rants about what *I* feel here, and about what *I* did not feel there, till at last the figure of little Mr. Lord, in the shape of a great capital I gets so thoroughly in between the reader and the waterfall that not a particle of the latter is to be discovered. At one point the poet directs his soul to issue a proclamation as follows: —

> "Proclaim, my soul, proclaim it to the sky!
> And tell the stars, and tell the hills whose feet
> Are in the depths of earth, their peaks in heaven,
> And tell the Ocean's old familiar face
> Beheld by day and night, in calm and storm,
> That they, nor aught beside in earth or heaven,
> Like thee, tremendous torrent, have so filled
> *Its* thought of beauty, and so awed with might!"

The "*Its*" has reference to the soul of Mr. Lord, who thinks it necessary to issue a proclamation to the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face — lest the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face should chance to be unaware of the fact that it (the soul of Mr. Lord) admitted the waterfall to be a fine thing; but whether the cataract for the compliment, or the stars for the information, are to be considered the party chiefly obliged — that, for the life of us, we cannot tell.

From the "first impression" of the cataract, he says: —

> "At length my soul awaked — waked not again
> To be o'erpressed, o'ermastered, and engulphed,
> But of itself possessed, o'er all without
> Felt conscious mastery!

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> And then
> Retired within, and self-withdrawn, I stood
> The two-fold centre and informing soul
> Of one vast harmony of sights and sounds,
> And from that deep abyss, that rock-built shrine,
> Though mute my own frail voice, I poured a hymn
> Of 'praise and gratulation' like the noise
> Of banded angels when they shout to wake
> Empyreal echoes!"

That so vast a personage as Mr. Lord should not be o'ermastered by the cataract, but feel "conscious mastery over all without" — and over all within, too — is certainly nothing more than reasonable and proper; but then he should have left the detail of these little facts to the cataract or to some other uninterested individual; even Cicero has been held to blame for a want of modesty, and although, to be sure, Cicero was not Mr. Lord, still Mr. Lord may be in danger of blame. He may have enemies (*very* little men!) who will pretend to deny that the "hymn of praise and gratulation" (if *this* is the hymn) bears at all points more than a partial resemblance to the "noise of banded angels when they shout to wake empyreal echoes." Not that *we* intend to deny it — but *they* will: — they are *very* little people and they *will*.

We have said that the "remarkable" feature, or at least one of the "remarkable" features of this volume is its platitude, its flatness. Whenever the reader meets anything not decidedly flat, he may take it for granted at once, that it is stolen. When the poet speaks, for example, at page 148, of

> "Flowers, of young poets the first words,"

who can fail to remember the line in "The Merry Wives of Windsor,"

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"Fairies use flowers for their charactery"?

At page 10 he says: —

"Great oaks their heavenward lifted arms stretch forth
In suppliance!"

The same thought will be found in "Pelham," where the author is describing the dead tree beneath which is committed the murder. The grossest plagiarisms, indeed, abound. We would have no trouble, even, in pointing out a score from our most unimportant self. At page 27, Mr. Lord says: —

"They, albeit with inward pain,
Who thought to sing thy dirge, must sing thy Pæan!"

In a poem called "Lenore," we have it

Avaunt! to-night my heart is light — no dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days.

At page 13, Mr. Lord says of certain flowers that

"Ere beheld on Earth they gardened Heaven!"

We print it as printed — note of admiration and all. In a poem called "Al Aaraaf" we have it thus: —

A gemmy flower,
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it shamed
All other loveliness: — 't was dropped from Heaven
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond.

At page 57, Mr. Lord says: —

"On the old and haunted mountain,
There in dreams I dared to climb,
Where the clear Castalian fountain
(Silver fountain) ever tinkling
All the green around it sprinkling
Makes perpetual rhyme —
To my dream enchanted, golden,

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Came a vision of the olden
Long-forgotten time."

There are no doubt many of our friends who will remember the commencement of our "Haunted Palace":—

"In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion,
It stood there;
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair.

"Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time, long ago)."

At page 60, Mr. Lord says:—

"And the aged beldames napping,
Dreamed of gently rapping, rapping,
With a hammer gently rapping,
Rapping on an infant's skull."

In "The Raven," we have it:—

"While I nodded, nearly napping,
Suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping,
Rapping at my chamber door."

But it is folly to pursue these thefts. As to any property of our own, Mr. Lord is very cordially welcome to whatever use he can make of it. But others may not be so pacifically disposed, and the book before us might be very materially thinned and reduced in cost, by discarding from it all that belongs to Miss Barrett, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, Proctor,

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Longfellow, and Lowell — the very class of poets, by the way, whom Mr. William W. Lord, in his "New Castalia," the most especially affects to satirize and to contemn.

It has been rumored, we say, or rather it has been *announced* that Mr. Lord is a graduate or perhaps a Professor of Princeton College — but we have had much difficulty in believing anything of the kind. The pages before us are not only utterly devoid of that classicism of tone and manner, that better species of classicism which a liberal education never fails to impart, but they abound in the most outrageously vulgar violations of grammar — of prosody in its most extended sense.

Of versification, and all that appertains to it, Mr. Lord is ignorant in the extreme. We doubt if he can tell the difference between a dactyl and an anapæst. In the Heroic (Iambic) Pentameter he is continually introducing such verses as these: —

"A faint symphony to Heaven ascending,"

"No heart of love, O God, Infinite One,"

"Of a thought as weak as aspiration,"

"Who were the original priests of this,"

"Of grace, magnificence, and power,"

"O'erwhelm me; this darkness that shuts out the sky."

Alexandrines, in the same metre, are encountered at every step, but it is very clear from the points at which they are met, and at which the cæsura is placed, that Mr. Lord has no idea of employing them as Alexandrines; they are merely excessive, that is to say, defective pentameters. In a word, judging by his rhythm, we might suppose that the poet could nei-

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ther see, hear, nor make use of his fingers. We do not know in America a versifier so utterly wretched and contemptible.

His most extraordinary sins, however, are in point of English. Here is his dedication, embodied in the very first page of the book: —

"To Professor Albert B. Dod, These Poems, the offspring of an Earnest (if ineffectual) Desire towards the True and Beautiful, which were hardly my own by Paternity, when they became his by Adoption, are inscribed, with all Reverence and Affection, by the Author."

What is anybody to make of all this? What is the meaning of a desire *toward?* — and is it the "True and Beautiful" or the "Poems" which were hardly Mr. Lord's "own by paternity, when they became his [Mr. Dod's] by adoption"?

At page 12, we read: —

> "Think heedless one, or who with wanton step
> *Tramples* the flowers."

At page 75, within the compass of eleven lines, we have three of the grossest blunders: —

> "O Thou for whom as in Thyself Thou art,
> And by Thyself perceived, we know no name,
> *Nor* dare *not* seek to express — but unto us,
> Adonai! who before the heavens were built
> Or Earth's foundation laid, within thyself,
> Thine own most glorious habitation, *dwelt*,
> But when within the abyss,
> With sudden light illuminated,
> Thou, thine image to behold,
> Into its quickened depths
> *Looked* down with brooding eye!"

At page 79, we read: —

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"But, ah! my heart, unduteous to my will,
Breathes only sadness: like an instrument
From whose quick strings, when hands devoid of skill
Solicit joy, *they* murmur and lament."

At page 86, is something even grosser than this:

"And still and rapt as pictured saint might be,
Like saint-like seemed as *her* she did adore."

At page 129, there is a similar error:—

"With half-closed eyes and ruffled feathers known
As *them* that fly not with the changing year"

At page 128, we find:—

"And thou didst dwell therein so truly loved
As none have been or shall be loved again,
And yet *perceived* not," etc.

At page 155, we have:—

"But yet it may not, cannot be
That thou at length *hath* sunk to rest."

Invariably Mr. Lord writes *didst did'st; couldst could'st*, etc. The fact is, he is absurdly ignorant of the commonest principles of grammar, and the only excuse we can make to our readers for annoying them with specifications in this respect, is that, without the specifications, we should never have been believed.

But enough of this folly. We are heartily tired of the book, and thoroughly disgusted with the impudence of the parties who have been aiding and abetting in thrusting it before the public. To the poet himself we have only to say — from any further specimens of your stupidity, good Lord deliver us!

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WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

In speaking of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has just published a very neat little volume of poems, we feel the necessity of employing the indefinite rather than the definite article. He is *a*, and by no means *the*, William Ellery Channing. He is only *the son* of the great essayist deceased. He is just such a person, in despite of his *clarum et venerabile nomen*, as Pindar would have designated by the significant term τις. It may be said in his favor that nobody ever heard of him. Like an honest woman, he has always succeeded in keeping himself from being made the subject of gossip. His book contains about sixty-three things, which he calls poems, and which he no doubt seriously supposes so to be. They are full of all kinds of mistakes, of which the most important is that of their having been printed at all. They are not precisely English — nor will we insult a great nation by calling them Kickapoo; perhaps they are Channingese. We may convey some general idea of them by two foreign terms not in common use — the Italian *pavoneggiarsi*, "to strut like a peacock," and the German word for "sky-rocketing," *schwärmerei*. They are more preposterous, in a word, than any poems except those of the author of "Sam Patch;" for we presume we are right (are we not?) in taking it for granted that the author of "Sam Patch" is the very worst of all the wretched poets that ever existed upon earth.

In spite, however, of the customary phrase about a

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man's "making a fool of himself," we doubt if any one was ever a fool of his own free will and accord. A poet, therefore, should not always be taken too strictly to task. He should be treated with leniency, and, even when damned, should be damned with respect. Nobility of descent, too, should be allowed its privileges not more in social life than in letters. The son of a great author cannot be handled too tenderly by the critical Jack Ketch. Mr. Channing must be hung, that 's true. He must be hung *in terrorem* — and for this there is no help under the sun; but then we shall do him all manner of justice, and observe every species of decorum, and be especially careful of his feelings, and hang him gingerly and gracefully, with a silken cord, as the Spaniards hang their grandees of the blue blood, their nobles of the *sangre azul.*

To be serious, then; as we always wish to be if possible. Mr. Channing (whom we suppose to be a *very* young man, since we are precluded from supposing him a *very* old one) appears to have been inoculated, at the same moment, with *virus* from Tennyson and from Carlyle. And here we do not wish to be misunderstood. For Tennyson, as for a man imbued with the richest and rarest poetic impulses, we have an admiration, a reverence unbounded. His "Morte D'Arthur," his "Locksley Hall," his "Sleeping Beauty," his "Lady of Shalott," his "Lotos Eaters," his "Ænone," and many other poems, are not surpassed, in all that gives to poetry its distinctive value, by the compositions of any one living or dead. And his leading error, that error which renders him unpopular — a point, to be sure, of no particular importance — that very error, we say, is founded in truth, in a

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THE ALLAN MANSION AT RICHMOND

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keen perception of the elements of poetic beauty. We allude to his quaintness, to what the world chooses to term his affectation. No true poet, no critic whose approbation is worth even a copy of the volume we now hold in our hand, will deny that he feels impressed, sometimes even to tears, by many of those very affectations which he is impelled by the prejudice of his education or by the cant of his reason to condemn. He should thus be led to examine the extent of the one and to be wary of the deductions of the other. In fact, the profound intuition of Lord Bacon has supplied, in one of his immortal apothegms, the whole philosophy of the point at issue. "There is no exquisite beauty," he truly says, "without some *strangeness* in its proportions." We maintain, then, that Tennyson errs, not in his occasional quaintness, but in its continual and obtrusive excess. And, in accusing Mr. Channing of having been inoculated with *virus* from Tennyson, we merely mean to say that he has adopted and exaggerated that noble poet's characteristic defect, having mistaken it for his principal merit.

Mr. Tennyson is quaint only; he is never, as some have supposed him, obscure, except, indeed, to the uneducated, whom he does not address. Mr. Carlyle, on the other hand, is obscure only; he is seldom, as some have imagined him, quaint. So far he is right; for although quaintness, employed by a man of judgment and genius, may be made auxiliary to a poem, whose true thesis is beauty, and beauty alone, it is grossly, and even ridiculously, out of place in a work of prose. But in his obscurity it is scarcely necessary to say that he is wrong. Either a man intends to be understood, or he does not. If he write a book which

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he intends not to be understood, we shall be very happy indeed not to understand it; but if he write a book which he means to be understood, and, in this book, be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass — and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr. Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.

It seems that having deduced, from Tennyson and Carlyle, an opinion of the sublimity of everything odd, and of the profundity of everything meaningless, Mr. Channing has conceived the idea of setting up for himself as a poet of unusual depth, and very remarkable powers of mind. His airs and graces, in consequence, have a highly picturesque effect, and the Boston critics, who have a notion that poets are porpoises (for they are always talking about their running in "schools"), cannot make up their minds as to what particular school he must belong. *We* say the Bobby Button school, by all means. He clearly belongs to that. And should nobody ever have heard of the Bobby Button school, that is a point of no material importance. We will answer for it, as it is one of our own. Bobby Button is a gentleman with whom, for a long time, we have had the honor of an intimate acquaintance. His personal appearance is striking. He has quite a big head. His eyes protrude and have all the air of saucers. His chin retreats. His mouth is depressed at the corners. He wears a perpetual frown of contemplation. His words are slow, emphatic, few, and oracular. His "the's," "ands," and "buts," have more meaning than other men's polysyllables. His nods would have put Burleigh's to the blush. His whole aspect, indeed, conveys the

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idea of a gentleman modest to a fault, and painfully overburdened with intellect. We insist, however, upon calling Mr. Channing's school of poetry the Bobby Button school, rather because Mr. Channing's poetry is strongly suggestive of Bobby Button than because Mr. Button himself ever dallied, to any very great extent, with the Muses. With the exception, indeed, of a *very* fine "Sonnet to a Pig" — or rather the fragment of a sonnet, for he proceeded no farther than the words "*O* piggy wiggy," with the *O* italicised for emphasis — with the exception of this, we say, we are not aware of his having produced anything worthy of that stupendous genius which is certainly *in* him, and only wants, like the starling of Sterne, "to get out."

The best passage in the book before us, is to be found at page 121, and we quote it, as a matter of simple justice, in full: —

> "Dear friend, in this fair atmosphere again,
> Far from the noisy echoes of the main,
> Amid the world-old mountains, and the hills
> From whose strange grouping a fine power distils
> The soothing and the calm, I seek repose,
> The city's noise forgot and hard stern woes.
> As thou once saidst, the rarest sons of earth
> Have in the dust of cities shown their worth,
> Where long collision with the human curse
> Has of great glory been the frequent nurse,
> *And only those who in sad cities dwell*
> *Are of the green trees fully sensible.*
> *To them the silver bells of tinkling streams*
> *Seem brighter than an angel's laugh in dreams.*"

The four lines italicised are highly meritorious, and the whole extract is so far decent and intelligible that we experienced a feeling of surprise upon meet-

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ing it amid the doggerel which surrounds it. Not less was our astonishment upon finding, at page 18, a fine thought so well embodied as the following:

> "*Or see the early stars, a mild sweet train,*
> *Come out to bury the diurnal sun.*"

But, in the way of commendation, we have now done. We have carefully explored the whole volume, in vain, for a single additional line worth even the most qualified applause.

The utter abandon — the charming *négligé* — the perfect looseness (to use a Western phrase) of his rhythm, is one of Mr. Channing's most noticeable, and certainly one of his most refreshing traits. It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this, at page 3, for example: —

> "Masculine almost though softly carved in grace,"

where "masculine" has to be read as a trochee, and "almost" as an iambus; or this, at page 8: —

> "That compels me on through wood, and fell, and moor,"

where "that compels" has to be pronounced as equivalent to the iambus "me on;" or this, at page 18:

> "I leave thee, *the* maid spoke to *the* true youth,"

where both the "the's" demand a strong accent to preserve the iambic rhythm; or this, at page 29:

> "So in our steps strides truth and honest trust,"

where (to say nothing of the grammar, which *may* be Dutch, but is not English) it is quite impossible to get through with the "steps strides truth" without dislocating the under jaw; or this, at page 32: —

> "The *se*rene azure. *The* keen stars are now;"

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or this, on the same page: —

"Some*time* of sorrow. Joy to *thy* Fu*ture;*"

or this, at page 56: —

"*Harsh action, even in repose inwardly harsh;*"

or this, at page 59: —

"Provides am*plest* enjoyment. O my brother;"

or this, at page 138: —

"*Like the swift petrel, mimicking the wave's measure;*"

about all of which, the less we say the better.

At page 96, we read thus: —

"Where the untrammelled soul on her wind-pinions,
Fearlessly sweeping, defies my earthly woes,
There, there upon that infinitest sea
Lady, thy hope, so fair a hope, summons me."

At page 51, we have it thus: —

"The river calmly flows
Through shining banks, through lonely glen
Where the owl shrieks, though ne'er the cheer of men
Has stirred its mute repose;
Still if you should walk there you would go there again."

At page 136, we read as follows: —

"Tune thy clear voice to no funereal song,
For O Death stands to welcome thee sure."

At page 116, he has this: —

"These graves, you mean;
Their histo*ry* who knows bet*ter* than I?
For in the busy street strikes on my ear
Each sound, even inaudible voices
Lengthen the long tale my memory tells."

Just below, on the same page, he has

"I see but little difference tru*ly;*"

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and at page 76 he fairly puts the climax to metrical absurdity in the lines which follow: —

> "The spirit builds his house in *the* least flowers —
> A beautiful mansion; how the colors live,
> Int*ri*cately de*li*cate!"

This is to be read, of course, intrikkittly delikkit, and "intrikkittly delikkit" it is — unless, indeed, we are very especially mistaken.

The affectations — the Tennysonisms of Mr. Channing — pervade his book at all points, and are not easily particularized. He employs, for example, the word "delight" for "delighted;" as at page 2: —

> "Delight to trace the mountain-brook's descent."

He uses, also, all the prepositions in a different sense from the rabble. If, for instance, he was called upon to say "on," he would n't say it by any means, but he 'd say "off," and endeavor to make it answer the purpose. For "to," in the same manner, he says "from;" for "with," "of," and so on: at page 2, for example: —

> "Nor less in winter, mid the glittering banks
> Heaped *of* unspotted snow, the maiden roved."

For "serene," he says "*se*rene;" as at page 4: —

> "The influences of this *se*rene isle."

For "subdued," he says "*sub*dued": as at page 16:

> "So full of thought, so *sub*dued to bright fears."

By the way, what kind of fears *are* bright?

For "eternal," he says "*e*terne": as at page 30: —

> "Has risen, *and* an *e*terne sun now paints."

For "friendless," he substitutes "friend*less;*" as at page 31: —

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"Are drawn in other figures. Not friend*less*."

To "future," he prefers "fu*ture*": as at page 32: —

"Sometime of sorrow. Joy to thy fu*ture*."

To "azure," in the same way, he prefers "a*zure*": as at page 46: —

"Ye stand each separate in the a*zure*."

In place of "unheard," he writes "*un*heard": as thus, at page 47: —

"Or think, though *un*heard, that your sphere is dumb."

In place of "perchance," he writes "*per*chance": as at page 71: —

"When *per*chance sorrow with her icy smile."

Instead of "more infinite," he writes "infin*ite*r," with an accent on the "nit," as thus, at page 100: —

"Hope's child, I summon infin*ite*r powers."

And here we might as well ask Mr. Channing, in passing, what idea he attaches to infinity, and whether he really thinks that he is at liberty to subject the adjective "infinite" to degrees of comparison. Some of these days we shall hear, no doubt, of "eternal," "eternaler," and "eternalest."

Our author is quite enamoured of the word "sumptuous," and talks about "sumptuous trees" and "sumptuous girls," with no other object, we think, than to employ the epithet at all hazards and upon all occasions. He seems unconscious that it means nothing more than expensive, or costly; and we are not quite sure that either trees or girls are, in America, either the one or the other.

For "loved" Mr. Channing prefers to say "was loving," and takes great pleasure in the law phrase

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"the same." Both peculiarities are exemplified at page 20, where he says: —

"The maid was loving this enamoured same."

He is fond, also, of inversions and contractions, and employs them in a very singular manner. At page 15 he has

"Now may I thee describe a Paradise."

At page 86 he says: —

"Thou lazy river, flowing neither way
Me figurest, and yet thy banks seem gay."

At page 143 he writes: —

"Men change that Heaven above not more;"

meaning that men change so much that Heaven above does not change more. At page 150 he says: —

"But so much soul hast thou within thy form
Than luscious summer days thou art the more;"

by which he would imply that the lady has so much soul within her form that she is more luscious than luscious summer days.

Were we to quote specimens under the general head of "utter and irredeemable nonsense," we should quote nine-tenths of the book. Such nonsense, we mean, as the following, from page 11: —

"I hear thy solemn anthem fall,
Of richest song upon my ear,
That clothes thee in thy golden pall
As this wide sun flows on the mere."

Now let us translate this: He hears (Mr. Channing) a solemn anthem, of richest song, fall upon his ear, and this anthem clothes the individual who sings it in that individual's golden pall, in the same manner that,

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or at the time when, the wide sun flows on the mere — which is all very delightful, no doubt.

At page 37, he informs us that,

> "It is not living,
> To a soul believing,
> To change each noble joy,
> Which our strength employs,
> For a state half rotten
> And a life of toys,"

and that it is

> "Better to be forgotten
> Than lose equipoise."

And we dare say it is, if one could only understand what kind of equipoise is intended. It is better to be forgotten, for instance, than to lose one's equipoise on the top of a shot tower.

Occupying the whole of page 88, he has the six lines which follow, and we will present any one (the author not excepted) with a copy of the volume, if any one will tell us what they are all about: —

> "He came and waved a little silver wand,
> He dropped the veil that hid a statue fair,
> He drew a circle with that pearly hand,
> His grace confined that beauty in the air,
> Those limbs so gentle now at rest from flight,
> Those quiet eyes now musing on the night."

At page 102, he has the following: —

> "Dry leaves with yellow ferns, they are
> Fit wreath of Autumn, while a star
> Still, bright, and pure, our frosty air
> Shivers in twinkling points
> Of thin celestial hair
> And thus one side of Heaven anoints."

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This we think we can explain. Let us see. Dry leaves, mixed with yellow ferns, are a wreath fit for autumn at the time when our frosty air shivers a still, bright, and pure star with twinkling points of thin celestial hair, and with this hair, or hair plaster, anoints one side of the sky. Yes — this is it — no doubt.

At page 123, we have these lines: —

"My sweet girl is lying still
In her lovely atmosphere;
The gentle hopes her blue veins fill
With pure silver warm and clear.

"Oh, see her hair, oh, mark her breast!
Would it not, oh, comfort thee,
If thou couldst nightly go to rest
By that virgin chastity?"

Yes; we think, upon the whole, it would. The eight lines are entitled a "Song," and we should like very much to hear Mr. Channing sing it.

Pages 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41, are filled with short "Thoughts" in what Mr. Channing supposes to be the manner of Jean Paul. One of them runs thus:

"How shall I live? In earnestness.
What shall I do? Work earnestly.
What shall I give? A willingness.
What shall I gain? Tranquillity.
But do you mean a quietness
In which I act and no man bless?
Flash out in action infinite and free,
Action conjoined with deep tranquillity,
Resting upon the soul's true utterance,
And life shall flow as merry as a dance."

All our readers will be happy to hear, we are sure, that Mr. Channing is going "to flash out." Elsewhere at page 97, he expresses very similar sentiments: —

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"My empire is myself and I defy
The external; yes, I rule the whole or die!"

It will be observed here, that Mr. Channing's empire is himself (a small kingdom, however), that he intends to defy "the external," whatever that is — perhaps he means the infernal — and that, in short, he is going to rule the whole or die; all which is very proper, indeed, and nothing more than we have to expect from Mr. Channing.

Again, at page 146, he is rather fierce than otherwise. He says: —

"We surely were not meant to ride the sea,
Skimming the wave in that so prisoned small,
Reposing our infinite faculties utterly.
Boom like a roaring sunlit waterfall,
Humming to infinite abysms: speak loud, speak free!"

Here Mr. Channing not only intends to "speak loud and free" himself, but advises everybody else to do likewise. For his own part, he says, he is going to "*boom*" — "to hum and to boom" — to "hum like a roaring waterfall" and "boom to an infinite abysm." What, in the name of Beelzebub, *is* to become of us all?

At page 39, while indulging in similar bursts of fervor and of indignation, he says: —

"Thou meetest a common man
With a delusive show of *can*,"

and this passage we quote by way of instancing what we consider the only misprint in the book. Mr. Channing could never have meant to say: —

"Thou meetest a common man
With a delusive show of *can*;"

for what *is* a delusive show of *can*? No doubt it should have been,

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Thou meetest a little pup
With a delusive show of tin-cup.

A can, we believe, is a tin-cup, and the cup must have been tied to the tail of the pup. Boys *will* do such tricks, and there is no earthly way of preventing them, we believe, short of cutting off their heads — or the tails of the pups.

And this remarkable little volume is, after all, by William Ellery Channing. A great name it has been said, is, in many cases, a great misfortune. We hear daily complaints from the George Washington Dixons, the Socrates Smiths, and the Napoleon Buonaparte Joneses, about the inconsiderate ambition of their parents and sponsors. By inducing invidious comparison, these *prænomina* get their bearers (so they say) into every variety of scrape. If George Washington Dixon, for example, does not think proper, upon compulsion, to distinguish himself as a patriot, he is considered a very singular man; and Socrates Smith is never brought up before his honor the Mayor without receiving a double allowance of thirty days; while his honor the Mayor can assign no sounder reason for his severity than that better things than getting toddied are to be expected of Socrates. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones, on the other hand, to say nothing of being called Nota Bene Jones by all his acquaintance, is cowskinned, with perfect regularity, five times a month, merely because people *will* feel it a point of honor to cowskin a Napoleon Buonaparte.

And yet these gentlemen — the Smiths and the Joneses — are wrong *in toto*, as the Smiths and the Joneses invariably are. They are wrong, we say, in accusing their parents and sponsors. They err in attributing their misfortunes and persecutions to the

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prænomina — to the names assigned them at the baptismal font. Mr. Socrates Smith does not receive his double quantum of thirty days because he is called Socrates, but because he is called Socrates *Smith*. Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones is not in the weekly receipt of a flogging on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte, but simply on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte *Jones*. Here, indeed, is a clear distinction. It is the surname which is to blame, after all. Mr. Smith must drop the Smith. Mr. Jones should discard the Jones. No one would ever think of taking Socrates — Socrates solely — to the watch-house; and there is not a bully living who would venture to cowskin Napoleon Buonaparte *per se*. And the reason is plain. With nine individuals out of ten, as the world is at present happily constituted, Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) would be taken for the veritable philosopher of whom we have heard so much, and Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) would be received implicitly as the hero of Austerlitz. And should Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) give an opinion upon military strategy, it would be heard with the profoundest respect. And should Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) deliver a lecture or write a book, what critic so bold as not to pronounce it more luminous than the logic of Emerson, and more profound than the Orphicism of Alcott. In fact, both Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, in the case we have imagined, would derive, through their own ingenuity, a very material advantage. But no such ingenuity has been needed in the case of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has been befriended by Fate, or the foresight of his sponsors, and who has *no* Jones or Smith at the end of his name.

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And here, too, a question occurs. There are many people in the world silly enough to be deceived by appearances. There are individuals so crude in intellect — so *green* (if we may be permitted to employ a word which answers our purpose much better than any other in the language), so green, we say, as to imagine, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, that a volume bearing upon its titlepage the name of William Ellery Channing must necessarily be the posthumous work of that truly illustrious author, the *sole* William Ellery Channing of whom anybody in the world ever heard. There are a vast number of uninformed young persons prowling about our bookshops, who will be raw enough to buy, and even to read half through this pretty little book (God preserve and forgive them!) mistaking it for the composition of another. But what then? Are not books made, as well as razors, to sell? The poet's name *is* William Ellery Channing — is it *not?* And if a man has not a right to the use of his own name, to the use of what has he a right? And could the poet have reconciled it to his conscience to have injured the sale of his own volume by any uncalled-for announcement upon the titlepage, or in a preface, to the effect that he is not his father, but only his father's very intelligent son? To put the case more clearly by reference to our old friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. Is either Mr. Smith, when mistaken for Socrates, or Mr. Jones, when accosted as Napoleon, bound, by any conceivable species of honor, to inform the whole world — the one, that he is not Socrates, but only Socrates Smith; the other, that he is by no means Napoleon Buonaparte, but only Napoleon Buonaparte Jones?

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CORNELIUS MATHEWS

"WAKONDAH" is the composition of MR. CORNELIUS MATHEWS, one of the editors of the monthly magazine "Arcturus." In the December number of the journal, the poem was originally set forth by its author, very much "*avec l'air d'un homme qui sauve sa patrie.*" To be sure, it was not what is usually termed the "leading" article of the month. It did not occupy that post of honor which, hitherto, has been so modestly filled by "Puffer Hopkins." But it took precedence of some exceedingly beautiful stanzas by Professor Longfellow, and stood second only to a very serious account of a supper which, however well it might have suited the taste of an Ariel, would scarcely have feasted the Anakim or satisfied the appetite of a Grandgousier. The supper was, or might have been, a good thing. The poem which succeeded it is not; nor can we imagine what has induced Messrs. Curry and Co. to be at the trouble of its republication. We are vexed with these gentlemen for having thrust this affair the second time before us. They have placed us in a predicament we dislike In the pages of "Arcturus" the poem did not come necessarily under the eye of the magazine critic. There is a tacitly understood courtesy about these matters — a courtesy upon which we need not comment. The contributed papers in any one journal of the class of "Arcturus" are not considered as *debatable* by any one other. General propositions, under the editorial head, are rightly made the subject of discussion; but in speak-

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ing of "Wakondah," for example, in the pages of our own magazine, we should have felt as if *making an occasion.* Now, upon our first perusal of the poem in question, we were both astonished and grieved that we could say, honestly, very little in its praise: — astonished, for by some means, not just now altogether intelligible to ourselves, we had become imbued with the idea of high poetical talent in Mr. Mathews: — grieved, because, under the circumstances of his position as editor of one of the very best journals in the country, we had been sincerely anxious to think well of his abilities. Moreover, we felt that to speak ill of them, under any circumstances whatever, would be to subject ourselves to the charge of envy or jealousy, on the part of those who do not personally know us. We, therefore, rejoiced that "Wakondah" was not a topic we were called upon to discuss. But the poem is republished, and placed upon our table, and these very "circumstances of position" which restrained us in the first place render it a positive duty that we speak distinctly in the second.

And very distinctly shall we speak. In fact, this effusion is a dilemma whose horns goad us into frankness and candor — "*c'est un malheur,*" to use the words of Victor Hugo, "*d'où on ne pourrait se tirer par des périphrases, par des quemadmodums et des verumenimveros.*" If we mention it at all, we are forced to employ the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English." "Wakondah," then, from beginning to end, is trash. With the trivial exceptions which we shall designate, it has no merit whatever; while its faults, more numerous than the leaves of Vallombrosa, are of that rampant class which, if any

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schoolboy could be found so uninformed as to commit them, any schoolboy should be remorselessly flogged for committing.

The story — or as the epics have it, the argument — although brief, is by no means particularly easy of comprehension. The design seems to be based upon a passage in Mr. Irving's "Astoria." He tells us that the Indians who inhabit the Chippewyan range of mountains, call it the "Crest of the World," and "think that Wakondah, or the Master of Life, as they designate the Supreme Being, has his residence among these aerial heights." Upon this hint Mr. Mathews has proceeded. He introduces us to Wakondah standing in person upon a mountain-top. He describes his appearance, and thinks that a Chinook would be frightened to behold it. He causes the "Master of Life" to make a speech, which is addressed, generally, to things at large, and particularly to the neighboring Woods, Cataracts, Rivers, Pinnacles, Steeps, and Lakes — not to mention an Earthquake. But all these (and, we think, judiciously) turn a deaf ear to the oration, which, to be plain, is scarcely equal to a second-rate Piankitank stump speech. In fact, it is a barefaced attempt at animal magnetism; and the mountains, etc., do no more than show its potency in resigning themselves to sleep, as they do.

"Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes" —

then he becomes very indignant, and accordingly launches forth into speech the second — with which the delinquents are afflicted, with occasional brief interruptions from the poet, in proper person, until the conclusion of the poem.

The subject of the two orations we shall be per-

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mitted to sum up compendiously in the one term "rigmarole." But we do not mean to say that our compendium is not an improvement, and a very considerable one, upon the speeches themselves, which, taken altogether, are the queerest, and the most rhetorical, not to say the most miscellaneous orations we ever remember to have listened to outside of an Arkansas House of Delegates. In saying this, we mean what we say. We intend no joke. Were it possible, we would quote the whole poem in support of our opinion. But as this is not possible, and, moreover, as we presume Mr. Mathews has not been so negligent as to omit securing his valuable property by a copyright, we must be contented with a few extracts here and there at random, with a few comments equally so. But we have already hinted that there were really one or two words to be said of this effusion in the way of commendation, and these one or two words might as well be said now as hereafter. The poem thus commences: —

"The moon ascends the vaulted sky to-night;
With a slow motion full of pomp ascends;
But, mightier than the moon that o'er it bends,
A form is dwelling on the mountain height
That boldly intercepts the struggling light
With darkness nobler than the planet's fire, —
A gloom and dreadful grandeur that aspire
To match the cheerful Heaven's far-shining might."

If we were to shut our eyes to the repetition of "might" (which, in its various inflections, is a pet word with our author, and lugged in upon all occasions), and to the obvious imitation of Longfellow's "Hymn to the Night," in the second line of this stanza, we should be justified in calling it good. The

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"darkness nobler than the planet's fire" is certainly good. The general conception of the colossal figure on the mountain summit, relieved against the full moon, would be unquestionably grand were it not for the bullish phraseology by which the conception is rendered, in a great measure, abortive. The moon is described as "ascending," and its "motion" is referred to, while we have the standing figure continuously intercepting its light. That the orb would soon pass from behind the figure, is a physical fact which the purpose of the poet required to be left out of sight, and which scarcely any other language than that which he has actually employed would have succeeded in forcing upon the reader's attention. With all these defects, however, the passage, especially as an opening passage, is one of high merit. Looking carefully for something else to be commended, we find at length the lines,

> "Lo! where our foe up through these vales ascends,
> Fresh from the embraces of the swelling sea,
> A glorious, white and shining Deity.
> Upon our strength his deep blue eye he bends,
> With threatenings full of thought and steadfast ends;
> *While desolation from his nostril breathes,*
> *His glittering rage he scornfully unsheathes*
> *And to the startled air its splendor lends.*"

This again, however, is worth only qualified commendation. The first six lines preserve the personification (that of a ship) sufficiently well; but, in the seventh and eighth, the author suffers the image to slide into that of a warrior unsheathing his sword. Still there is force in these concluding verses, and we begin to fancy that this is saying a very great deal for the author of "Puffer Hopkins."

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The best stanza in the poem (there are thirty-four in all) is the thirty-third: —

> " No cloud was on the moon, yet on his brow
> A deepening shadow fell; and on his knees,
> *That shook like tempest-stricken mountain trees,*
> *His heavy head descended, sad and low,*
> *Like a high city smitten by the blow*
> *Which secret earthquakes strike and toppling falls*
> *With all its arches, towers, and cathedrals*
> *In swift and unconjectured overthrow.*"

This is, positively, not bad. The first line italicised is bold and vigorous, both in thought and expression; and the four last (although by no means original) convey a striking picture. But then the whole idea, in its general want of keeping, is preposterous. What is more absurd than the conception of a man's head descending *to his knees*, as here described — the thing could not be done by an Indian juggler or a man of gum-caoutchouc — and what is more inappropriate than the resemblance attempted to be drawn between a *single* head descending, and the *innumerable* pinnacles of a falling city? It is difficult to understand, *en passant*, why Mr. Mathews has thought proper to give " cathedrals " a quantity which does not belong to it, or to write " unconjectured " when the rhythm might have been fulfilled by " unexpected," and when " unexpected " would have fully conveyed the meaning which " unconjectured " does not.

By dint of farther microscopic survey, we are enabled to point out one, and alas, *only* one more good line in the poem: —

> " Green dells that into silence stretch away,"

contains a richly poetical thought, melodiously embodied. We only refrain, however, from declaring,

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flatly, that the line is not the property of Mr. Mathews, because we have not at hand the volume from which we believe it to be stolen. We quote the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas in full. They will serve to convey some faint idea of the general poem. The italics are our own: —

" *The Spirit lowers and speaks: 'Tremble, ye wild Woods!*
Ye Cataracts! your *organ-voices* sound!
Deep Crags, in earth by massy tenures bound,
Oh, Earthquake, *level flat!* The peace that broods
Above this world, and steadfastly eludes
Your power, howl, Winds, and break; the peace that mocks
Dismay 'mid silent streams and voiceless rocks —
Through wildernesses, cliffs, and solitudes.

" 'Night-shadowed Rivers — lift your dusky hands
And clap them harshly *with a sullen roar!*
Ye thousand Pinnacles and Steeps deplore
The glory that departs! above *you* stands,
Ye Lakes with azure waves and snowy strands,
A power that utters forth his loud behest
Till mountain, lake, and river shall attest,
The puissance of a Master's *large commands.*'

" So spake the Spirit with a wide-cast look
Of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty;
As if he caught a sight of either sea
And all the subject realm between; then shook
His brandished arms; his stature scarce could brook
Its confine; *swelling wide, it seemed to grow*
As grows a cedar on a mountain's brow
By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took!*

" The woods are deaf and will not be aroused,
The mountains are asleep, they hear him not,
Nor from deep-founded silence can be wrought,
Though herded bison on their steeps have browsed;
Beneath their banks in *darksome stillness* housed
The rivers loiter like a calm-bound sea;

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In anchored nuptials to dumb apathy
Cliff, wilderness, and solitude are spoused."

Let us endeavor to translate this gibberish, by way of ascertaining its import, if possible. Or, rather, let us state the stanzas, in substance. The Spirit *lowers*, that is to say, *grows angry*, and speaks. He calls upon the Wild Woods to tremble, and upon the Cataracts to sound their voices, which have the tone of an organ. He addresses, then, *an* Earthquake, or perhaps Earthquake in general, and requests it to *level flat* all the Deep Crags which are bound by massy tenures in earth — a request, by the way, which any sensible Earthquake must have regarded as tautological, since it is difficult to level anything otherwise than *flat:* — Mr. Mathews, however, is no doubt the best judge of flatness in the abstract, and may have peculiar ideas respecting it. But to proceed with the Spirit. Turning to the Winds, he enjoins them to howl and break the peace that broods above this world and steadfastly eludes their power — the same peace that mocks a Dismay 'mid streams, rocks, *et cetera*. He now speaks to the night-shadowed Rivers, and commands them to lift their dusky hands, and clap them harshly *with a sullen roar* — and as *roaring* with one's *hands* is not the easiest matter in the world, we can only conclude that the Rivers here reluctantly disobeyed the injunction. Nothing daunted, however, the Spirit, addressing a thousand Pinnacles and Steeps, desires them to deplore the glory that departs, or is departing — and we can almost fancy that we see the Pinnacles deploring it upon the spot. The Lakes — at least such of them as possess azure waves and snowy strands — then come in for their share of the oration. They are called upon to observe

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— to take notice — that above them stands no ordinary character — no Piankitank stump orator, or anything of that sort — but a Power; — a Power, in short, to use the exact words of Mr. Mathews, "that *utters forth* his loud behest, till mountain, lake, and river shall attest the puissance of a Master's *large commands.*" *Utters forth* is no doubt somewhat supererogatory, since "to utter" is of itself to emit, or send forth; but as "the Power" appears to be somewhat excited he should be forgiven such mere errors of speech. We cannot, however, pass over his boast about uttering forth his loud behest *till* mountain, lake, and river shall obey him — for the fact is that his threat is *vox et præterea nihil*, like the countryman's nightingale in Catullus; the issue showing that the mountains, lakes, and rivers — all very sensible creatures — go fast asleep upon the spot, and pay no attention to his rigmarole whatever. Upon the "large commands" it is not our intention to dwell. The phrase is a singularly mercantile one to be in the mouth of "a Power." It is not impossible, however, that Mr. Mathews himself is

> "busy in the cotton trade
> And sugar line."

But to resume. We were originally told that the Spirit "lowered" and spoke, and in truth his entire speech is a scold at Creation; yet stanza the eighth is so forgetful as to say that he spoke "with a wide-cast look of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty." Be this point as it may, he now shakes his brandished arms, and, swelling out, seems to grow

> "As grows a cedar on a mountain's top —
> By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took*"

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— or as swells a turkey-gobbler; whose image the poet unquestionably had in his mind's eye when he penned the words about the ruffled cedar. As for "took" instead of "taken" — why not say "tuk" at once? We have heard of chaps "vot vas tuk up" for sheep-stealing, and we know of one or two that ought to be "tuk up" for murder of the Queen's English.

We shall never get on. Stanza the ninth assures us that the woods are deaf and will not be aroused, that the mountains are asleep and so forth — all which Mr. Mathews might have anticipated. But the rest he could not have foreseen. He could not have foreknown that "the rivers, housed beneath their banks in *darksome stillness*," would "loiter like a calm-bound sea," and still less could he have been aware, unless informed of the fact, that "*cliff, wilderness, and solitude would be spoused in anchored nuptials to dumb apathy!*" Good Heavens — no! — nobody could have anticipated *that!* Now, Mr. Mathews, we put it to you as to a man of veracity — what *does* it all mean?

"As when in times to startle and revere."

This line, of course, is an accident on the part of our author. At the time of writing it he could not have remembered

"To haunt, to startle, and waylay."

Here is another accident of imitation; for seriously, we do not mean to assert that it is anything more —

"I urged the dark red hunter in his quest
Of pard or panther with a gloomy zest;
And while through darkling woods they swiftly fare
Two seeming creatures of the oak-shadowed air,
I sped the game and fired the follower's breast."

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The line italicised we have seen quoted by some of our daily critics as beautiful; and so, barring the "oak-shadowed air," it is. In the mean time Campbell, in "Gertrude of Wyoming," has the *words*

"the hunter and the deer a shade."

Campbell stole the idea from our own Freneau, who has the *line*

"The hunter and the deer a shade."

Between the two, Mr. Mathews's claim to originality, at this point, will, very possibly, fall to the ground.

It appears to us that the author of "Wakondah" is either very innocent or very original about matters of versification. His stanza is an ordinary one. If we are not mistaken, it is that employed by Campbell in his "Gertrude of Wyoming" — a favorite poem of our author's. At all events it is composed of pentameters whose rhymes alternate by a simple and fixed rule. But our poet's deviations from this rule are so many and so unusually picturesque that we scarcely know what to think of them. Sometimes he introduces an Alexandrine at the close of a stanza; and here we have no right to quarrel with him. It is not usual in this metre; but still he may do it if he pleases. To put an Alexandrine in the middle, or at the beginning, of one of these stanzas is droll, to say no more. See stanza third, which commences with the verse

"Upon his brow a garland of the woods he wears,"

and stanza twenty-eight, where the last line but one is

"And rivers singing all aloud tho' still unseen."

Stanza the seventh begins thus,

"The Spirit lowers and speaks — tremble, ye Wild Woods!"

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Here it must be observed that "wild woods" is not meant for a double rhyme. If scanned on the fingers (and we presume Mr. Mathews is in the practice of scanning thus), the line is a legitimate Alexandrine. Nevertheless, it cannot be *read*. It is like nothing under the sun; except, perhaps, Sir Philip Sidney's attempt at English hexameter in his "Arcadia." Some one or two of his verses we remember. For example —

"How to the woods love run's as well as ride's to the Pallace,
Neither hee bear's reverence to a Prince, nor pitie to begger,
But (like a point in midst of a circle) is still of a neerness."

With the aid of an additional spondee or dactyl Mr. Mathews's very odd verse might be scanned in the same manner, and would, in fact, be a legitimate hexameter: —

The Spi | rit lowers | and speaks | tremble ye | wild woods.

Sometimes our poet takes even a higher flight and *drops* a foot, or a half-foot, or, for the matter of that, a foot and a half. Here, for example, is a very singular verse to be introduced in a pentameter rhythm,

"Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes."

Here another,

"Yon full-orbed fire shall cease to shine."

Here, again, are lines in which the rhythm demands an accent on impossible syllables: —

"But ah, winged *with* what agonies and pangs."
"Swiftly before me *nor* care I how vast."
"I see vi*sions* denied to mortal eyes."
"Uplifted longer *in* heaven's western glow."

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But these are trifles. Mr. Mathews is young, and we take it for granted that he will improve. In the mean time what does he mean by spelling lose, *loose*, and its (the possessive pronoun) *it's* — reiterated instances of which fashions are to be found *passim* in "Wakondah"? What does he mean by writing "dare," the present, for "dared," the perfect? — see stanza the twelfth. And, as we are now in the catachetical vein, we may as well conclude our dissertation at once with a few other similar queries.

What do you mean, then, Mr. Mathews, by

"A sudden silence *like a tempest* fell"?

What do you mean by a "quivered stream;" "a shapeless gloom;" a "habitable wish;" "natural blood;" "oak-shadowed air;" "customary peers" and "thunderous noises"?

What do you mean by

"A sorrow mightier than the midnight skies"?

What do you mean by

"A bulk that swallows up the sea-blue sky"?

Are you not aware that calling the sky as blue as the sea, is like saying of the snow that it is as white as a sheet of paper?

What do you mean, in short, by

"Its feathers darker than a thousand fears"?

Is not this something like "blacker than a dozen and a half of chimney-sweeps and a stack of black cats," and are not the whole of these illustrative observations of yours somewhat upon the plan of that of the witness who described a certain article stolen as being of the size and shape of a bit of chalk? What do you *mean* by them, we say?

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And here, notwithstanding our earnest wish to satisfy the author of "Wakondah," it is indispensable that we bring our notice of the poem to a close. We feel grieved that our observations have been so much at random; — but at random, after all, is it alone possible to convey either the letter or the spirit of that which, a mere jumble of incongruous nonsense, has neither beginning, middle, nor end. We should be delighted to proceed — but how? to applaud — but what? Surely not this trumpery declamation, this maudlin sentiment, this metaphor run-mad, this twaddling verbiage, this halting and doggerel rhythm, this unintelligible rant and cant! "Slid, if these be your passados and montantes, we'll have none of them." Mr. Mathews, you have clearly mistaken your vocation, and your effusion as little deserves the title of *poem* (oh sacred name!) as did the rocks of the royal forest of Fontainebleau that of "*mes déserts*" bestowed upon them by Francis the First. In bidding you adieu we commend to your careful consideration the remark of M. Timon, "*que le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique doit lui-même savoir parler Français.*"

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HENRY B. HIRST

MR. HENRY B. HIRST, of Philadelphia, has, undoubtedly, some merit as a poet. His sense of beauty is keen, although indiscriminative; and his versification would be unusually effective but for the spirit of hyperism, or exaggeration, which seems to be the ruling feature of the man. He is always sure to overdo a good thing; and, in especial, he insists upon rhythmical effects until they cease to have any effect at all, or until they give to his compositions an air of mere oddity. His principal defect, however, is a want of constructive ability; he can never put together a story intelligibly. His chief sin is imitativeness. He never writes anything which does not immediately put us in mind of something that we have seen better written before. Not to do him injustice, however, I here quote two stanzas from a little poem of his, called "The Owl." The passages italicised are highly imaginative: —

"When twilight fades and evening falls
Alike o'er tree and tower,
And Silence, like a pensive maid,
Walks round each slumbering bower;
When fragrant flowerets fold their leaves
And all is still in sleep,
The hornèd owl *on moonlit wing*
Flies from the donjon keep.

"And he calls aloud — 'tu-whit! tu-whoo!'
And the nightingale is still,
And the pattering step of the hurrying hare
Is hushed upon the hill;

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And he crouches low in the dewy grass
As the *lord of the night* goes by,
Not with a loudly whirring wing
But like a lady's sigh."

No one, save a poet at heart, could have conceived these images; and they are embodied with much skill. In the "pattering step," etc., we have an admirable "echo of sound to sense," and the title, "lord of the night," applied to the owl, does Mr. Hirst infinite credit — *if* the idea be original with Mr. Hirst. Upon the whole, the poems of this author are eloquent (or perhaps elocutionary) rather than poetic; but he has poetical merit, beyond a doubt — merit which his enemies need not attempt to smother by any mere ridicule thrown upon the *man*.

To my face, and in the presence of my friends, Mr. Hirst has always made a point of praising my own poetical efforts; and, for this reason, I should forgive him, perhaps, the amiable weakness of abusing them anonymously. In a late number of the Philadelphia "Saturday Courier," he does me the honor of attributing to my pen a ballad called "Ulalume," which has been going the rounds of the press, sometimes with my name to it, sometimes with Mr. Willis's, and sometimes with no name at all. Mr. Hirst insists upon it that *I* wrote it, and it is just possible that he knows more about the matter than I do myself. Speaking of a particular passage, he says: —

"We have spoken of the mystical appearance of Astarte as a fine touch of Art. This is borrowed, and from the first canto of Hirst's 'Endymion.' [The reader will observe that the anonymous critic has *no* personal acquaintance whatever with Mr. Hirst, but takes care to call him "Hirst" simply, just as we say "Homer"] from Hirst's

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'Endymion,' published years since in the 'Southern Literary Messenger': —

> "'Slowly Endymion bent, the light Elysian
> Flooding his figure. Kneeling on one knee,
> He loosed his sandals, lea
> And lake and woodlawn glittering on his vision —
> A fairy landscape, bright and beautiful,
> With Venus at her full.'

"Astarte is another name for Venus; and when we remember that Diana is about to descend to Endymion — that the scene which is about to follow is one of love — that Venus is the star of love — and that Hirst, by introducing it as he does, shadows out his story exactly as Mr. Poe introduces his Astarte — the plagiarism of idea becomes evident."

Now I really feel ashamed to say that, as yet, I have not perused "Endymion" — for Mr. Hirst will retort at once — "That is no fault of mine — you *should* have read it — I gave you a copy — and, besides, you had no business to fall asleep when I did you the honor of reading it *to* you." Without a word of excuse, therefore, I will merely copy the passage in "Ulalume" which the author of "Endymion" says I purloined from the lines quoted above: —

> And now, as the night was senescent
> And star-dials pointed to morn,
> As the star-dials hinted of morn,
> At the end of my path a liquescent
> And nebulous lustre was born,
> Out of which a miraculous crescent
> Arose with a duplicate horn,
> Astarte's bediamonded crescent
> Distinct with its duplicate horn.

Now, I may be permitted to regret — really to *regret* — that I can find no resemblance between the

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two passages in question; for *malo cum Platone errare, etc.*, and to be a good imitator of Henry B. Hirst, is quite honor enough for *me.*

In the mean time, here is a passage from another little ballad of mine, called "Lenore," first published in 1830: —

"How *shall* the ritual, then, be read? the requiem how be sung
By you — by yours, the evil eye, — by yours, the slanderous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?"

And here is a passage from "The Penance of Roland," by Henry B. Hirst, published in "Graham's Magazine" for January, 1848: —

"*Mine the tongue that wrought this evil — mine the false and slanderous tongue*
That done to death the Lady Gwineth — oh, my soul is sadly wrung!
'Demon! devil,' groaned the warrior, 'devil of *the evil eye!*'"

Now my objection to all this is not that Mr. Hirst has *appropriated* my property (I am fond of a *nice* phrase), but that he has not done it so cleverly as I could wish. Many a lecture, on literary topics, have I given Mr. Hirst; and I confess that, in general, he has adopted my advice so implicitly that his poems, upon the whole, are little more than our conversations done into verse.

"Steal, dear Endymion," I used to say to him — "for very well do I know you can't help it; and the more you put in your book that is not your own, why the better your book will be; but be cautious and steal *with an air.* In regard to myself — you need give yourself no trouble about *me.* I shall always feel honored in being of use to you; and provided you purloin my poetry *in a reputable manner*, you are

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quite welcome to just as much of it as you (who are a *very* weak little man) can conveniently carry away."

So far — let me confess — Mr. Hirst has behaved remarkably well in largely availing himself of the privilege thus accorded; but, in the case now at issue, he stands in need of some gentle rebuke. I do not object to his stealing my verses; but I do object to his stealing them in bad grammar. My quarrel with him is not, in short, that he *did* this thing, but that he *has went and done did it.*

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SEBA SMITH

WHAT few notices we have seen of "Powhatan," speak of it as the production of *Mrs.* Seba Smith. To be sure, gentlemen may be behind the scenes, and know more about the matter than we do. They may have some private reason for understanding that black is white, some reason into which we, personally, are not initiated. But, to ordinary perception, "Powhatan" is the composition of Seba Smith, *Esquire*, of "Jack Downing" memory, and not of his wife. *Seba Smith* is the name upon the titlepage; and the personal pronoun which supplies the place of this well-known prænomen and cognomen in the preface, is, we are constrained to say, of the masculine gender. "The author of 'Powhatan'" — thus, for example, runs a portion of the prolegomena — "does not presume to claim for *his* production the merit of good and genuine poetry, nor does *he* pretend to assign it a place in the classes or forms into which poetry is divided" — in all which, by the way, he is decidedly right. But can it be that no gentleman has read even so far as the Preface of the book? Can it be that the critics have had no curiosity to creep into the *adyta* — into the inner mysteries of this temple? If so, they are decidedly right too.

"Powhatan" is handsomely bound. Its printing is clear beyond comparison. Its paper is magnificent, and we undertake to say (for *we have* read it through with the greatest attention) that there is not a single typographical error in it from one end to the other.

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Further than this, in the way of commendation, no man with both brains and conscience should proceed. In truth, a more absurdly flat affair — for flat is the only epithet which applies in this case — was never before paraded to the world with so grotesque an air of bombast and assumption.

To give some idea of the *tout ensemble* of the book; we have first a Dedication to the "Young People of the United States," in which "Mr. Jack Downing" lives, in "the hope that he may do some good in his day and generation, by adding something to the sources of rational enjoyment and *mental culture*." Next, we have a Preface, occupying four pages, in which, quoting his publishers, the author tells us that poetry is a "very great bore, and won't sell" — a thing which cannot be denied in certain cases, but which "Mr. Downing" denies in his own. "It may be true," he says, "of endless masses of words, that are poured forth from the press, under the name of poetry," — but it is not true "of *genuine* poetry, of that which is worthy of the name," — in short, we presume he means to say it is not in the least little bit true of "Powhatan;" with regard to whose merits he wishes to be tried, not by the critics (we fear, in fact, that here it is the critics who will be tried), but by the "*common* taste of *common* readers" — all which ideas are common enough, to say no more.

We have next, a "Sketch of the Character of Powhatan," which is exceedingly interesting and commendable, and which is taken from Burk's "History of Virginia" — four pages more. Then comes a Proem — four pages more — forty-eight lines, twelve lines to a page — in which all that we can understand is something about the name of "Powhatan,"

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"Descending to a distant age,
Embodied forth on the deathless page"

of the author — that is to say, of "Jack Downing, Esquire." We have now, one after the other, CANTOS one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven — each subdivided into PARTS, by means of Roman numerals — some of these PARTS comprehending as many as six lines, upon the principle, we presume, of packing up precious commodities in small bundles. The volume then winds up with NOTES, in proportion of three to one, as regards the amount of text, and taken, the most of them, from Burk's "Virginia," as before.

It is very difficult to keep one's countenance when reviewing such a "work" as this; but we will do our best, for the truth's sake, and put on as serious a face as the case will admit.

The leading fault of "Powhatan," then, is precisely what its author supposes to be its principal merit. "It would be difficult," he says, in that pitiable Preface, in which he has so exposed himself, "to find a poem that embodies more truly the spirit of history, or indeed that follows out more faithfully many of its details." It would, indeed; and we are very sorry to say it. The truth is, "Mr. Downing" has never dreamed of any artistic arrangement of his facts. He has gone straight forward, like a blind horse, and turned neither to the one side nor to the other, for fear of stumbling. But he gets them all in, every one of them — the facts, we mean. Powhatan never did anything in his life, we are sure, that "Mr. Downing" has not got in his poem. He begins at the beginning, and goes on steadily to the end — painting away at his story, just as a sign-painter at a sign, beginning at the left-hand side of his board, and plastering through

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to the right. But he has omitted one very ingenious trick of the sign-painter. He has forgotten to write under his portrait, "*this is a pig*," and thus there is some danger of mistaking it for an opossum.

But we are growing scurrilous, in spite of our promise, and must put on a sober visage once more. It is a hard thing, however, when we have to read and write about such doggerel as this: —

"But bravely to the river's brink
I led my warrior train,
And face to face, each glance they sent,
We sent it back again.
Their werowance looked stern at me,
And I looked stern at him,
And all my warriors clasped their bows,
And nerved each heart and limb.
I raised my heavy war-club high,
And swung it fiercely round,
And shook it towards the shallop's side,
Then laid it on the ground.
And then the lighted calumet
I offered to their view,
And thrice I drew the sacred smoke,
And toward the shallop blew,
And as the curling vapor rose,
Soft as a spirit prayer,
I saw the pale-face leader wave
A white flag in the air.
Then launching out their painted skiff
They boldly came to land,
And spoke us many a kindly word,
And took us by the hand,
Presenting rich and shining gifts,
Of copper, brass, and beads,
To show that they were men like us,
And prone to generous deeds.
We held a long and friendly talk,
Inquiring whence they came,

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And who the leader of their band
And what their country's name,
And how their mighty shallop moved
Across the boundless sea,
And why they touched our great king's land
Without his liberty."

It won't do. We cannot sing to this tune any longer. We greatly prefer,

"John Gilpin was a gentleman
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town."

Or,

"Old Grimes is dead, that good old man,
We ne'er shall see him more,
He used to wear an overcoat
All buttoned down before,"

or lines to that effect — we wish we could remember the words. The part, however, about

"Their werowance looked stern at me,
And I looked stern at him,"

is not quite original with "Mr. Downing" — is it? We merely ask for information. Have we not heard something about

"An old crow sitting on a hickory limb,
Who winked at me, and I winked at him"?

The simple truth is, that "Mr. Downing" never committed a greater mistake in his life than when he fancied himself a poet, even in the ninety-ninth degree. We doubt whether he could distinctly state the difference between an epic and an epigram. And it will not do for him to appeal from the critic to common readers — because we assure him his book is a very

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uncommon book. We never saw any one so uncommonly bad — nor one about whose parturition so uncommon a fuss has been made, so little to the satisfaction of common-sense. Your poem is a curiosity, "Mr. Jack Downing;" your "Metrical Romance" is not worth a single half-sheet of the paste-board upon which it is printed. This is our humble and honest opinion; and, although honest opinions are not very plentiful just now, you can have ours at what it is worth. But we wish, before parting, to ask you one question. What *do* you mean by that motto from Sir Philip Sidney, upon the titlepage? "He cometh to you with a tale that holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney-corner." What do you mean by it? we say. Either you cannot intend to apply it to the "tale" of "Powhatan," or else all the "old men" in your particular neighborhood must be very old men; and all the "little children" a set of dunderheaded little ignoramuses.

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L. A. WILMER

A SATIRE, professedly such, at the present day, and especially by an American writer, is a welcome novelty, indeed. We have really done very little in the line upon this side of the Atlantic — nothing, certainly, of importance, Trumbull's clumsy poem and Halleck's "Croakers" to the contrary, notwithstanding. Some things we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque, without intending a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we could have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the matter of directly-meant and genuine satire, it cannot be denied that we are sadly deficient. Although, as a literary people, however, we are not exactly Archilochuses — although we have no pretensions to the ἠχέοντες ἴαμβοι — although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves, there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

We repeat, that we are glad to see this book of Mr. Wilmer's; first, because it is something new under the sun; secondly, because, in many respects, it is well executed; and thirdly, because, in the universal corruption and rigmarole amid which we gasp for breath, it is really a pleasant thing to get even one accidental whiff of the unadulterated air of truth.

"The Quacks of Helicon," as a poem and otherwise, has many defects, and these we shall have no scruple in pointing out, although Mr. Wilmer is a personal

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friend of our own, and we are happy and proud to say so; but it has also many remarkable merits — merits which it will be quite useless for those aggrieved by the satire, quite useless for any *clique* or set of *cliques*, to attempt to frown down, or to affect not to see or to feel or to understand.

Its prevalent blemishes are referable chiefly to the leading sin of imitation. Had the work been composed professedly in paraphrase of the whole manner of the sarcastic epistles of the times of Dryden and Pope, we should have pronounced it the most ingenious and truthful thing of the kind upon record. So close is the copy that it extends to the most trivial points — for example, to the old forms of punctuation. The turns of phraseology, the tricks of rhythm, the arrangement of the paragraphs, the general conduct of the satire — everything — all — are Dryden's. We cannot deny, it is true, that the satiric model of the days in question is insusceptible of improvement and that the modern author who deviates therefrom must necessarily sacrifice something of merit at the shrine of originality. Neither can we shut our eyes to the fact that the imitation in the present case has conveyed in full spirit the higher qualities as well as in rigid letter the minor elegances and general peculiarities of the author of "Absalom and Achitophel." We have here the bold, vigorous, and sonorous verse, the biting sarcasm, the pungent epigrammatism, the unscrupulous directness, as of old. Yet it will not do to forget that Mr. Wilmer has been shown how to accomplish these things. He is thus only entitled to the praise of a close observer, and of a thoughtful and skilful copyist. The images are, to be sure, his own. They are neither Pope's, nor Dryden's, nor

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Rochester's, nor Churchill's; but they are moulded in the identical mould used by these satirists.

This servility of imitation has seduced our author into errors which his better sense should have avoided. He sometimes mistakes intentions; at other times he copies faults, confounding them with beauties. In the opening of the poem, for example, we find the lines:

> "Against usurpers, Olney, I declare
> A righteous, just, and patriotic war."

The rhymes "war" and "declare" are here adopted from Pope, who employs them frequently; but it should have been remembered that the modern relative pronunciation of the two words differs materially from the relative pronunciation of the era of the "Dunciad."

We are also sure that the gross obscenity, the filth —we can use no gentler name — which disgraces "The Quacks of Helicon," cannot be the result of innate impurity in the mind of the writer. It is but a part of the slavish and indiscriminating imitation of the Swift and Rochester school. It has done the book an irreparable injury, both in a moral and pecuniary view, without effecting anything whatever on the score of sarcasm, vigor, or wit. "Let what is to be said, be said plainly." True; but let nothing vulgar be *ever* said, or conceived.

In asserting that this satire, even in its mannerism, has imbued itself with the full spirit of the polish and of the pungency of Dryden, we have already awarded it high praise. But there remains to be mentioned the far loftier merit of speaking fearlessly the truth, at an epoch when truth is out of fashion, and under circumstances of social position which would have deterred

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almost any man in our community from a similar Quixotism. For the publication of "The Quacks of Helicon" — a poem which brings under review, by name, most of our prominent *literati*, and treats them, generally, as they deserve (what treatment could be more bitter?) — for the publication of this attack, Mr. Wilmer, whose subsistence lies in his pen, has little to look for, apart from the silent respect of those at once honest and timid, but the most malignant open or covert persecution. For this reason, and because it is the truth which he has spoken, do we say to him, from the bottom of our hearts, "God speed!"

We repeat it: — *it is* the truth which he has spoken; and who shall contradict us? He has said unscrupulously what every reasonable man among us has long known to be "as true as the Pentateuch" — that, as a literary people, we are one vast perambulating humbug. He has asserted that we are clique-ridden; and who does not smile at the obvious truism of that assertion? He maintains that chicanery is, with us, a far surer road than talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this? The corrupt nature of our ordinary criticism has become notorious. Its powers have been prostrated by its own arm. The intercourse between critic and publisher, as it now almost universally stands, is comprised either in the paying and pocketing of black mail, as the price of a simple forbearance, or in a direct system of petty and contemptible bribery, properly so called — a system even more injurious than the former to the true interests of the public, and more degrading to the buyers and sellers of good opinion, on account of the more positive character of the service here rendered for the consideration received. We laugh at the idea of any denial of our

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assertions upon this topic; they are infamously true. In the charge of general corruption there are undoubtedly many noble exceptions to be made. There are, indeed, some very few editors, who, maintaining an entire independence, will receive no books from publishers at all, or who receive them with a perfect understanding, on the part of these latter, that an unbiassed critique will be given. But these cases are insufficient to have much effect on the popular mistrust: a mistrust heightened by late exposure of the machinations of coteries in New York — coteries which, at the bidding of leading booksellers, manufacture, as required from time to time, a pseudo-public opinion by wholesale for the benefit of any little hanger-on of the party or pettifogging protector of the firm.

We speak of these things in the bitterness of scorn. It is unnecessary to cite instances where one is found in almost every issue of a book. It is needless to call to mind the desperate case of Fay — a case where the pertinacity of the effort to gull, where the obviousness of the attempt at forestalling a judgment, where the wofully over-done be-Mirrorment of that man-of-straw, together with the pitiable platitude of his production, proved a dose somewhat too potent for even the well-prepared stomach of the mob. We say it is supererogatory to dwell upon "Norman Leslie," or other by-gone follies, when we have before our eyes hourly instances of the machinations in question. To so great an extent of methodical assurance has the system of puffery arrived that publishers of late have made no scruple of keeping on hand an assortment of commendatory notices prepared by their men of all work, and of sending these notices around to the multitudinous papers within their influence,

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done up within the fly-leaves of the book. The grossness of these base attempts, however, has not escaped indignant rebuke from the more honorable portion of the press; and we hail these symptoms of restiveness under the yoke of unprincipled ignorance and quackery (strong only in combination) as the harbinger of a better era for the interests of real merit and of the national literature as a whole.

It has become, indeed, the plain duty of each individual connected with our periodicals heartily to give whatever influence he possesses to the good cause of integrity and the truth. The results thus attainable will be found worthy his closest attention and best efforts. We shall, thus, frown down all conspiracies to foist inanity upon the public consideration at the obvious expense of every man of talent who is not a member of a clique in power. We may even arrive, in time, at that desirable point from which a distinct view of our men of letters may be obtained, and their respective pretensions adjusted, by the standard of a rigorous and self-sustaining criticism alone. That their several positions are as yet properly settled, that the posts which a vast number of them now hold are maintained by any better tenure than that of the chicanery upon which we have commented, will be asserted by none but the ignorant, or the parties who have best right to feel an interest in the "good old condition of things." No two matters can be more radically different than the reputation of some of our prominent *littérateurs*, as gathered from the mouths of the people (who glean it from the paragraphs of the papers), and the same reputation as deduced from the private estimate of intelligent and educated men. We do not advance this fact as a new discovery. Its

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truth, on the contrary, is the subject, and has long been so, of every-day witticism and mirth.

Why not? Surely there can be few things more ridiculous than the general character and assumptions of the ordinary critical notices of new books! An editor, sometimes without the shadow of the commonest attainment, often without brains, always without time, does not scruple to give the world to understand that he is in the *daily* habit of critically reading and deciding upon a flood of publications, one-tenth of whose titlepages he may possibly have turned over, three-fourths of whose contents would be Hebrew to his most desperate efforts at comprehension, and whose entire mass and amount, as might be mathematically demonstrated, would be sufficient to occupy, in the most cursory perusal, the attention of some ten or twenty readers for a month! What he wants in plausibility, however, he makes up in obsequiousness; what he lacks in time he supplies in temper. He is the most easily pleased man in the world. He admires everything, from the big Dictionary of Noah Webster to the last diamond edition of "Tom Thumb." Indeed, his sole difficulty is in finding tongue to express his delight. Every pamphlet is a miracle — every book in boards is an epoch in letters. His phrases, therefore, get bigger and bigger every day, and, if it were not for talking Cockney, we might call him a "regular swell."

Yet, in the attempt at getting definite information in regard to any one portion of our literature, the merely general reader, or the foreigner, will turn in vain from the lighter to the heavier journals. But it is not our intention here to dwell upon the radical, antique, and systematized rigmarole of our Quarterlies.

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The articles here are anonymous. Who writes? — who causes to be written? Who but an ass will put faith in tirades which may be the result of personal hostility, or in panegyrics which nine times out of ten may be laid, directly or indirectly, to the charge of the author himself? It is in the favor of these saturnine pamphlets that they contain, now and then, a good essay *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, which may be looked into, without decided somnolent consequences at any period not immediately subsequent to dinner. But it is useless to expect criticism from periodicals called "Reviews" from never reviewing. Besides, all men know, or should know, that these books are sadly given to verbiage. It is a part of their nature, a condition of their being, a point of their faith. A veteran reviewer loves the safety of generalities, and is, therefore, rarely particular. "Words, words, words," are the secret of his strength. He has one or two ideas of his own, and is both wary and fussy in giving them out. His wit lies with his truth, in a well, and there is always a world of trouble in getting it up. He is a sworn enemy to all things simple and direct. He gives no ear to the advice of the giant Moulineau — "*Belier, mon ami, commences au commencement.*" He either jumps at once into the middle of his subject, or breaks in at a back door, or sidles up to it with the gait of crab. No other mode of approach has an air of sufficient profundity. When fairly into it, however, he becomes dazzled with the scintillations of his own wisdom, and is seldom able to see his way out. Tired of laughing at his antics, or frightened at seeing him flounder, the reader, at length, shuts him up, with the book. "What song the Sirens sang," says Sir Thomas

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Browne, "or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture;" but it would puzzle Sir Thomas, backed by Achilles and all the Sirens in Heathendom, to say, in nine cases out of ten, *what is the object* of a thorough-going Quarterly Reviewer.

Should the opinions promulgated by our press at large be taken, in their wonderful aggregate, as an evidence of what American literature absolutely is (and it may be said that, in general, they are really so taken), we shall find ourselves the most enviable set of people upon the face of the earth. Our fine writers are legion. Our very atmosphere is redolent of genius; and we, the nation, are a huge, well-contented chameleon, grown pursy by inhaling it. We are *teretes et rotundi* — enwrapped in excellence. All our poets are Miltons, neither mute nor inglorious; all our poetesses are "American Hemanses;" nor will it do to deny that all our novelists are great Knowns or great Unknowns, and that everybody who writes, in every possible and impossible department, is the Admirable Crichton, or, at least, the Admirable Crichton's ghost. We are thus in a glorious condition, and will remain so until forced to disgorge our ethereal honors. In truth, there is some danger that the jealousy of the Old World will interfere. It cannot long submit to that outrageous monopoly of "all the decency and all the talent" in which the gentlemen of the press give such undoubted assurance of our being so busily engaged.

But we feel angry with ourselves for the jesting tone of our observations upon this topic. The prevalence of the spirit of puffery is a subject far less for merriment than for disgust. Its truckling, yet dog-

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matical character — its bold, unsustained, yet self-sufficient and wholesale laudation — is becoming, more and more, an insult to the common-sense of the community. Trivial as it essentially is, it has yet been made the instrument of the grossest abuse in the elevation of imbecility, to the manifest injury, to the utter ruin, of true merit. Is there any man of good feeling and of ordinary understanding, is there one single individual among all our readers, who does not feel a thrill of bitter indignation, apart from any sentiment of mirth, as he calls to mind instance after instance of the purest, of the most unadulterated quackery in letters, which has risen to a high post in the apparent popular estimation, and which still maintains it, by the sole means of a blustering arrogance, or of a busy wriggling conceit, or of the most barefaced plagiarism, or even through the simple immensity of its assumptions — assumptions not only unopposed by the press at large, but absolutely supported in proportion to the vociferous clamor with which they are made, in exact accordance with their utter baselessness and untenability? We should have no trouble in pointing out, to-day, some twenty or thirty so-called literary personages, who, if not idiots, as we half think them, or if not hardened to all sense of shame by a long course of disingenuousness, will now blush in the perusal of these words through consciousness of the shadowy nature of that purchased pedestal upon which they stand — will now tremble in thinking of the feebleness of the breath which will be adequate to the blowing it from beneath their feet. With the help of a hearty good-will, even *we* may yet tumble them down.

So firm, through a long endurance, has been the hold taken upon the popular mind (at least so far as

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we may consider the popular mind reflected in ephemeral letters) by the laudatory system which we have deprecated, that what is in its own essence a vice has become endowed with the appearance and met with the reception of a virtue. Antiquity, as usual, has lent a certain degree of speciousness even to the absurd. So continuously have we puffed that we have, at length, come to think puffing the duty and plain speaking the dereliction. What we began in gross error, we persist in through habit. Having adopted in the earlier days of our literature the untenable idea that this literature, as a whole, could be advanced by an indiscriminate approbation bestowed on its every effort — having adopted this idea, we say, without attention to the obvious fact that praise of all was bitter although negative censure to the few alone deserving, and that the only result of the system, in the fostering way, would be the fostering of folly — we now continue our vile practices through the supineness of custom, even while in our national self-conceit we repudiate that necessity for patronage and protection in which originated our conduct. In a word, the press throughout the country has not been ashamed to make head against the very few bold attempts at independence which have from time to time been made in the face of the reigning order of things. And if, in one, or perhaps two, insulated cases, the spirit of severe truth, sustained by an unconquerable will, was not to be so put down, then, forthwith, were private chicaneries set in motion; then was had resort, on the part of those who consider themselves injured by the severity of criticism (and who were so, if the just contempt of every ingenuous man is injury) — resort to arts of the most virulent indignity, to untraceable slanders, to

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ruthless assassination in the dark. We say these things were done, while the press in general looked on, and, with a full understanding of the wrong perpetrated, spoke not against the wrong. The idea had absolutely gone abroad — had grown up little by little into toleration — that attacks however just upon a literary reputation however obtained, however untenable, were well retaliated by the basest and most unfounded traduction of personal fame. But is this an age — is this a day — in which it can be necessary even to advert to such considerations as that the book of the author is the property of the public, and that the issue of the book is the throwing down of the gauntlet to the reviewer — to the reviewer whose duty is the plainest; the duty not even of approbation, or of censure, or of silence, at his own will, but at the sway of those sentiments and of those opinions which are derived from the author himself, through the medium of his written and published words? True criticism is the reflection of the thing criticised upon the spirit of the critic.

But *à nos moutons* — to "The Quacks of Helicon." This satire has many faults besides those upon which we have commented. The title, for example, is not sufficiently distinctive, although otherwise good. It does not confine the subject to *American* quacks, while the work does. The two concluding lines enfeeble instead of strengthening the *finale*, which would have been exceedingly pungent without them. The individual portions of the thesis are strung together too much at random — a natural sequence is not always preserved — so, that although the lights of the picture are often forcible, the whole has what, in artistical parlance, is termed an accidental and spotty appearance. In truth, the parts of the poem have

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evidently been composed each by each, as separate themes, and afterwards fitted into the general satire, in the best manner possible.

But a more reprehensible sin than any or than all of these is yet to be mentioned — the sin of indiscriminate censure. Even here Mr. Wilmer has erred through imitation. He has held in view the sweeping denunciations of "The Dunciad," and of the later (abortive) satire of Byron. No one in his senses can deny the justice of the general charges of corruption in regard to which we have just spoken from the text of our author. But are there *no* exceptions? We should, indeed, blush if there were not. And is there *no* hope? Time will show. We cannot do everything in a day — *Non se gaña Zamora en un ora.* Again, it cannot be gainsaid that the greater number of those who hold high places in our poetical literature are absolute nincompoops — fellows alike innocent of reason and of rhyme. But neither are we *all* brainless, nor is the devil himself so black as he is painted. Mr. Wilmer must read the chapter in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, "*de ce qu'est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu*," — for there is *some* difference, after all. It will not do in a civilized land to run a-muck like a Malay. Mr. Morris *has* written good songs. Mr. Bryant is not *all* a fool. Mr. Willis is not *quite* an ass. Mr. Longfellow *will* steal, but, perhaps, he cannot help it (for we have heard of such things), and then it must not be denied that *nil tetigit quod non ornavit.*

The fact is that our author, in the rank exuberance of his zeal, seems to think as little of discrimination as the Bishop of Autun did of the Bible. Poetical "things in general" are the windmills at which he spurs his Rosinante. He as often tilts at what is true

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as at what is false; and thus his lines are like the mirrors of the temples of Smyrna, which represent the fairest images as deformed. But the talent, the fearlessness, and especially the *design* of this book, will suffice to preserve it from that dreadful damnation of "silent contempt," to which editors, throughout the country, if we are not much mistaken, will endeavor, one and all, to consign it.

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J. G. C. BRAINARD

AMONG all the *pioneers* of American literature, whether prose or poetical, there is *not one* whose productions have not been much overrated by his countrymen. But this fact is more especially obvious in respect to such of these pioneers as are no longer living; nor is it a fact of so deeply transcendental a nature as only to be accounted for by the Emersons and Alcotts. In the first place, we have but to consider that gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyper-patriotic triumph have been blended, and finally confounded with mere admiration, or appreciation, in respect to the labors of our earlier writers; and, in the second place, that Death has thrown his customary veil of the sacred over these commingled feelings, forbidding them, in a measure, to be *now* separated or subjected to analysis. "In speaking of the deceased," says that excellent old English Moralist, James Puckle, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," "so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence." And with somewhat too inconsiderate a promptitude have we followed the spirit of this quaint advice. The mass of American readers have been, hitherto, in no frame of mind to view with calmness, and to discuss with discrimination, the true claims of the few who were *first* in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as, in the plenitude of her arrogance, she, at one period, half affected and half wished to believe; and where any of

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these few have departed from among us, the difficulty of bringing their pretensions to the test of a proper criticism has been enhanced in a very remarkable degree. But even as concerns the living: is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and that Mr. Paulding owes *all* of his reputation as a novelist, to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither Mr. Paulding nor Mr. Cooper *could* have written, are daily published by native authors without attracting more of commendation than can be crammed into a hack newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this is because there is no longer either reason or wit in the query, — "Who reads an American book?" It is not because we lack the talent in which the days of Mr. Paulding exulted, but because such talent has shown itself to be common. It is not because we have *no* Mr. Coopers; but because it has been demonstrated that we might, at any moment, have as many Mr. Coopers as we please. In fact, we are now strong in our own resources. We have, at length, arrived at that epoch when our literature may and must stand on its own merits, or fall through its own defects. We have snapped asunder the leading-strings of our British Grandmamma, and, better still, we have survived the first hours of our novel freedom, — the first licentious hours of a hobbledehoy braggadocio and swagger. At last, then, we are in a condition to be criticised — even more, to be neglected; and the journalist is no longer in danger of being impeached for *lèse majesté* of the Democratic Spirit, who shall assert, with sufficient humility, that we have committed an error in mistak-

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ing Kettell's "Specimens" for the Pentateuch, or Joseph Rodman Drake for Apollo.

The case of this latter gentleman is one which well illustrates what we have been saying. We believe it was about 1835 that Mr. Dearborn republished "The Culprit Fay," which then, as at the period of its original issue, was belauded by the universal American press, in a manner which must have appeared ludicrous — not to speak *very* plainly — in the eyes of all unprejudiced observers. With a curiosity much excited by comments at once so grandiloquent and so general, we procured and read the poem. What we found it we ventured to express distinctly, and at some length, in the pages of the "Southern Messenger." It is a well-versified and sufficiently fluent composition, without high merit of any kind. Its defects are gross and superabundant. Its plot and conduct, considered in reference to its scene, are absurd. Its originality is none at all. Its imagination (and this was the great feature insisted upon by its admirers) is but a "counterfeit presentment," — but the shadow of the shade of that lofty quality which is, in fact, the soul of the Poetic Sentiment, but a drivelling *effort to be fanciful*, an effort resulting in a species of hop-skip-and-go-merry rodomontade, which the uninitiated feel it a duty to call ideality, and to admire as such, while lost in surprise at the impossibility of performing at least the latter half of the duty with anything like satisfaction to themselves. And all this we not only asserted, but without difficulty *proved*. Dr. Drake has written some beautiful poems, but "The Culprit Fay" is not of them. We neither expected to hear any dissent from our opinions, nor did we hear any. On the contrary, the approving voice of every critic in the coun-

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try whose *dictum* we had been accustomed to respect was to us a sufficient assurance that we had not been very grossly in the wrong. In fact, the public taste was then approaching the right. The truth indeed had not, as yet, made itself heard; but we had reached a point at which it had but to be plainly and boldly put, to be at least tacitly admitted.

This habit of apotheosizing our literary pioneers was a most indiscriminating one. Upon all who wrote, the applause was plastered with an impartiality really refreshing. Of course, the system favored the dunces at the expense of true merit; and, since there existed a certain fixed standard of exaggerated commendation to which all were adapted after the fashion of Procrustes, it is clear that the most meritorious required *the least stretching*, — in other words, that although all were much overrated, the deserving were overrated in a less degree than the unworthy. Thus with Brainard: — a man of indisputable genius, who, in any more discriminate system of panegyric, would have been long ago bepuffed into Demi-Deism; for if "M'Fingal," for example, is in reality what we have been told, the commentators upon Trumbull, as a matter of the simplest consistency, should have exalted into the seventh heaven of poetical dominion the author of the many graceful and vigorous effusions which are now lying, in a very neat little volume, before us.

Yet we maintain that even these effusions have been overpraised, and materially so. It is not that Brainard has not written poems which may rank with those of any American, with the single exception of Longfellow; but that the general merit of our whole national Muse has been estimated too highly, and

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that the author of "The Connecticut River" has, individually, shared in the exaggeration. No poet among us has composed what would deserve the tithe of that amount of approbation so innocently lavished upon Brainard. But it would not suit our purpose just now to enter into any elaborate analysis of his productions. It so happens, however, that we open the book at a brief poem, an examination of which will stand us in good stead of this general analysis, since it is by this very poem that the admirers of its author are content to swear, since it is the fashion to cite it as his best, since thus, in short, it is the chief basis of his notoriety, if not the surest triumph of his fame.

We allude to "The Fall of Niagara," and shall be pardoned for quoting it in full: —

"The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain
While I look upward to thee. It would seem
As if God poured thee from His hollow hand,
And hung His bow upon thy awful front;
And spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake
The 'sound of many waters;' and had bade
Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.

"Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we
That hear the question of that voice sublime?
Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet, by thy thundering side?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In his short life to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to HIM
Who drowned a world and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains? — a light wave
That breaks and whispers of its Maker's might."

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It is a very usual thing to hear these verses called not merely the best of their author, but the best which have been written on the subject of Niagara. Their positive merit appears to us only partial. We have been informed that the poet had seen the great cataract before writing the lines; but the Memoir prefixed to the present edition, denies what, for our own part, we never believed, for Brainard was truly a poet, and no poet could have looked upon Niagara, in the substance, and written thus about it. If he saw it at all, it must have been in fancy — "at a distance" — *ἑκάς* — as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilochus, who died ages before the villain was born.

To the two opening verses we have no objection; but it may be well observed, in passing, that had the mind of the poet been really "crowded with strange thoughts," and not merely *engaged in an endeavor to think*, he would have entered at once upon the thoughts themselves, without allusion to the state of his brain. His subject would have left him no room for self.

The third line embodies an absurd and impossible, not to say a contemptible image. We are called upon to conceive a similarity between the *continuous* downward sweep of Niagara, and the momentary splashing of some definite and of course trifling quantity of water *from a hand;* for, although it is the hand of the Deity Himself which is referred to, the mind is irresistibly led, by the words "poured from His hollow hand," to that idea which has been *customarily* attached to such phrase. It is needless to say, moreover, that the bestowing upon Deity a human form is at best a low and most unideal conception. In fact, the poet has committed the grossest of errors in liken-

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ing the fall to any material object; for the human fancy can fashion nothing which shall not be inferior in majesty to the cataract itself. Thus bathos is inevitable; and there is no better exemplification of bathos than Mr. Brainard has here given.[1]

The fourth line but renders the matter worse, for here the figure is most inartistically shifted. The handful of water becomes animate; for it has a front — that is, a forehead, and upon this forehead the Deity proceeds to hang a bow, that is, a rainbow. At the same time He "speaks in that loud voice," etc.; and here it is obvious that the ideas of the writer are in a sad state of fluctuation; for he transfers the idiosyncrasy of the fall itself (that is to say, its sound) to the One who pours it from His hand. But not content with all this, Mr. Brainard commands the flood to *keep a kind of tally;* for this is the low thought which the expression about "notching in the rocks" immediately and inevitably induces. The whole of this first division of the poem embraces, we hesitate not to say, one of the most jarring, inappropriate, mean, and

[1] It is remarkable that Drake is, perhaps, the sole poet who has employed, in the description of Niagara, imagery which does not produce a bathetic impression. In one of his minor poems he has these magnificent lines: —

"How sweet 't would be, *when all the air*
In moonlight swims, along thy river
To couch upon the grass, and hear
Niagara's everlasting voice
Far in the deep blue West away —
That dreaming and poetic noise
We mark not in the glare of day;
Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
When o'er the brink the tide is driven,
As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from Heaven!"

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in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery, which can be found out of the tragedies of Nat Lee or the farces of Thomas Carlyle.

In the latter division, the poet recovers himself, as if ashamed of his previous bombast. His natural instinct (for Brainard was no artist) has enabled him to feel that *subjects which surpass in grandeur all efforts of the human imagination are well depicted only in the simplest and least metaphorical language* — a proposition as susceptible of demonstration as any in Euclid. Accordingly, we find a material sinking in tone, although he does not at once discard all imagery. The "Deep calleth unto deep" is nevertheless a great improvement upon his previous rhetoricianism. The personification of the waters above and below would be good in reference to any subject less august. The moral reflections which immediately follow, have at least the merit of simplicity; but the poet exhibits no very lofty imagination when he bases these reflections only upon the cataract's superiority to man *in the noise it can create;* nor is the concluding idea more spirited, where the mere difference between the quantity of water which occasioned the flood, and the quantity which Niagara precipitates, is made the measure of the Almighty Mind's superiority to that cataract which it called by a thought into existence.

But although "The Fall of Niagara" does not deserve all the unmeaning commendation it has received, there are, nevertheless, many truly beautiful poems in this collection, and even more certain evidences of poetic power. "To a Child, the Daughter of a Friend," is exceedingly graceful and terse. "To the Dead" has equal grace, with more vigor, and, moreover, a touching air of melancholy. Its melody is

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very rich, and in the monotonous repetition, at each stanza, of a certain rhyme, we recognize a fantastic yet true imagination. "Mr. Merry's Lament for Long Tom" would be worthy of all praise were not its unusually beautiful rhythm an imitation from Campbell, who would deserve his high poetical rank, if only for its construction. Of the merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not *poetry*. Mr. Brainard excelled in them, and they are very good in their place; but that place is not in a collection of poems. The prevalent notions upon this head are extremely vague; yet we see no reason why any ambiguity should exist. Humor, with an exception to be made hereafter, is directly antagonistical to that which is the soul of the Muse proper; and the omni-prevalent belief, that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, is not without a firm basis in nature and in reason. But it so happens that humor and that quality which we have termed the soul of the Muse (imagination) are both essentially aided in their development by the same adventitious assistance — that of rhythm and of rhyme. Thus the only bond between humorous verse and poetry, properly so called, is that they employ in common a certain tool. But this single circumstance has been sufficient to occasion, and to maintain through long ages, a confusion of two very distinct ideas in the brain of the unthinking critic. There is, nevertheless, an individual branch of humor which blends so happily with the ideal that from the union result some of the finest effects of legitimate poesy. We allude to what is termed "*archness*" — a trait with which popular feeling, which is unfailingly poetic, has invested, for example, the whole character of the fairy. In the volume before us there is a brief

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composition entitled "The Tree Toad" which will afford a fine exemplification of our idea. It seems to have been hurriedly constructed, as if its author had felt ashamed of his light labor. But that in his heart there was a secret exultation over these verses for which his reason found it difficult to account, *we know;* and there is not a really imaginative man within sound of our voice to-day, who, upon perusal of this little "Tree Toad," will not admit it to be one of the truest poems ever written by Brainard.

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GEORGE P. MORRIS

THERE are few cases in which mere popularity should be considered a proper test of merit; but the case of song-writing is, I think, one of the few. In speaking of song-writing, I mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with an eye to their adaptation for music in the vulgar sense. In this ultimate destination of the song proper, lies its essence — its genius. It is the strict reference to music — it is the dependence upon modulated expression — which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether unique, and separates it, in great measure and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from ordinary literature; rendering it independent of merely ordinary proprieties; allowing it, and in fact demanding for it, a wide latitude of law; absolutely insisting upon a certain wild license and *indefinitiveness* — an indefinitiveness recognized by every musician who is not a mere fiddler, as an important point in the philosophy of his science, as the soul, indeed, of the sensations derivable from its practice — sensations which bewilder while they enthrall, and which would not so enthrall if they did not so bewilder.

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound simply, are out of the reach of analysis, although referable, possibly, in their last result, to that merely mathematical recognition of equality which seems to be the root of all beauty. Our impressions of harmony and melody in conjunction are more readily analyzed; but one thing is certain,

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hat the sentimental pleasure derivable from music is nearly in the ratio of its indefinitiveness. Give to music any undue decision, imbue it with any very determinate tone, and you deprive it at once of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury; you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up; you exhaust it of its breath of faery. It then becomes a tangible and easily appreciable thing, a conception of the earth, earthy. It will not, to be sure, lose all its power to please, but all that I consider the distinctiveness of that power. And to the over-cultivated talent or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate nare will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A determinateness of expression is sought — and sometimes by composers who should know better — is sought as a beauty rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from high authorities, attempts at absolute *imitation* in musical sounds. Who can forget, or cease to regret, the many errors of this kind into which some great minds have fallen, simply through over-estimating the triumphs of skill? Who can help lamenting the Battle-of-Prague? What man of taste is not ready to laugh, or to weep, over their "guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbusses, and thunder"? "Vocal music," says L'Abbaté Gravina, "ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions rather than the warbling of canary-birds, which our singers nowadays affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences." This is true only so far as the "rather" is concerned. If *any* music must imitate *anything*, it were undoubtedly better

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that the imitation should be limited as Gravina suggests.

That indefinitiveness which is at least one of the essentials of true music, must, of course, be kept in view by the song-writer; while, by the critic, it should always be considered in his estimate of the *song*. It is, in the author, a consciousness — sometimes, merely an instinctive appreciation — of this necessity for the indefinite, which imparts to all songs, richly conceived, that free, affluent, and hearty manner, little scrupulous about niceties of phrase, which cannot be better expressed than by the hackneyed French word *abandonnement*, and which is so strikingly exemplified in both the serious and joyous ballads and carols of our old English progenitors. Wherever verse has been found most strictly married to music, this feature prevails. It is thus the essence of all antique song. It is the soul of Homer. It is the spirit of Anacreon. It is even the genius of Æschylus. Coming down to our own times, it is the vital principle in De Béranger. Wanting this quality, no song-writer was ever truly popular, and, for the reasons assigned, no song-writer need ever expect to be so.

These views properly understood, it will be seen how baseless are the ordinary objections to songs proper, on the score of "conceit" (to use Johnson's word), or of hyperbole, or on various other grounds tenable enough in respect to poetry not designed for music. The "conceit," for example, which some envious rivals of MORRIS have so much objected to —

> "Her heart and morning broke together
> In the storm — "

this "conceit" is merely in keeping with the essential spirit of the song proper. To all reasonable persons

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it will be sufficient to say that the fervid, hearty, free-spoken songs of Cowley and of Donne — more especially of Cunningham, of Harrington, and of Carew — abound in precisely similar things; and that they are to be met with, plentifully, in the polished pages of Moore and of Béranger, who introduce them with thought and retain them after mature deliberation.

Morris is, very decidedly, our best writer of songs — and, in saying this, I mean to assign him a high rank as *poet*. For my own part, I would much rather have written the best song of a nation than its noblest epic. One or two of Hoffman's songs have merit, but they are sad echoes of Moore; and even if this were not so (everybody knows that it *is* so), they are totally deficient in the real song-essence. "Woodman, Spare that Tree," and "By the Lake where droops the Willow" are compositions of which any poet, living or dead, might justly be proud. By these, if by nothing else, Morris is immortal. It is quite impossible to put down such things by sneers. The affectation of contemning them is of no avail — unless to render manifest the envy of those who affect the contempt. As mere *poems*, there are several of Morris's compositions equal, if not superior, to either of those just mentioned, but as *songs* I much doubt whether these latter have ever been surpassed. In quiet grace and unaffected tenderness, I know no American poem which excels the following: —

"Where Hudson's wave o'er silvery sands
Winds through the hills afar,
Old Cro'-nest like a monarch stands,
Crowned with a single star.
And there, amid the billowy swells
Of rock-ribbed, cloud-capped earth,

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My fair and gentle Ida dwells,
A nymph of mountain birth.

"The snow-flake that the cliff receives,
The diamonds of the showers,
Spring's tender blossoms, buds, and leaves,
The sisterhood of flowers,
Morn's early beam, eve's balmy breeze,
Her purity define;
Yet Ida 's dearer far than these
To this fond breast of mine.

"My heart is on the hills; the shades
Of night are on my brow:
Ye pleasant haunts and silent glades,
My soul is with you now!
I bless the star-crowned Highlands where
My Ida's footsteps roam:
Oh, for a falcon's wing to bear
Me onward to my home!"

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BAYARD TAYLOR

I BLUSH to see, in the "Literary World," an invidious notice of BAYARD TAYLOR'S "Rhymes of Travel." What makes the matter worse, the critique is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet; and what makes the matter worst, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits or in the minor morals of the Muse, with the worst of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone: —

"It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts everything. He can do one thing as well as another; for he can really do nothing. . . . Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, *but*," etc., etc., etc.

The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical ruses — that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general, feel to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's distinguishing excellence. He is, unquestionably, the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of all our poets,

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and secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of skill in their way. But thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing imagination evinced in the lines italicised. My very soul revolts at such efforts (as the one I refer to) to depreciate such poems as Mr. Taylor's. Is there no honor — no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be forever sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that which assures temporary success to *them*, in common with Swaim's Panacea or Morrison's Pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a magazine paper exposing — *ruthlessly* exposing — the *dessous des cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while *genius* (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which any one, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American Letters by an article in that magnanimous journal, the "—— Review." He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (as in the case of Simms) to vilify, and vilify personally, any one not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, *and must have it.*

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young or old, — in point, I mean, of *expression*. His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's implied sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment"), and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order. By "rhetoric," I intend the mode generally in which thought is presented. Where shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

"First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones
Of twice three thousand years,
Came *with the woe a grieving goddess owns*
Who longs for mortal tears.
The dust of ruin to her mantle clung
And dimmed her crown of gold,
While *the majestic sorrows of her tongue*
From Tyre to Indus rolled:

"'Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of woe
Whose only glory streams
From its lost childhood, like the arctic glow
Which sunless Winter dreams!
In the red desert moulders Babylon,
And the wild serpent's hiss
Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone
And waste Persepolis.'

. . . . . .

"Then from her seat, *amid the palms embowered*
That shade the Lion-land,
Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,
The fetters on her hand.
Backward she saw, from out her drear eclipse,
The mighty Theban years,
And the deep anguish of her mournful lips
Interpreted her tears."

I copy these passages first, because the critic in question has copied them, without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur — for they are grand;

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WILLIAM WALLACE

AMONG our men of genius whom, because they *are* men of genius, we neglect, let me not fail to mention WILLIAM WALLACE, of Kentucky. Had Mr. Wallace been born under the wings of that ineffable buzzard, the "North American Review," his unusual merits would long ago have been blazoned to the world as the far inferior merits of Sprague, Dana, and others of like calibre, have already been blazoned. Neither of these gentlemen has written a poem worthy to be compared with "The Chaunt of a Soul," published in the "Union Magazine" for November, 1848. It is a noble composition throughout — imaginative, eloquent, full of dignity, and well sustained. It abounds in detached images of high merit — for example: —

"Your early splendor 's gone
Like stars into a cloud withdrawn —
Like music laid asleep
In dried-up fountains."

"Enough, I *am*, and shall not choose to die.
No matter *what* our future Fate may be,
To live is in itself a majesty."

"And now, arising from yon deep,
'T is plain *as a white statue on a tall, dark steep.*"

"Then
The Earth and Heaven were fair,
While only less than Gods seemed all my fellow-men.
. . . . . .
Oh! the delight, the gladness,
The sense yet love of madness,
The glorious choral exultations,

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The far-off sounding of the banded nations,
The wings of angels in melodious sweeps
Upon the mountain's hazy steeps,
The very dead astir within their coffined deeps,
The dreamy veil that wrapt the star and sod —
A swathe of purple, gold, and amethyst,
And, *luminous behind the billowing mist*
Something that looked to my young eyes like God."

I admit that the defect charged, by an envious critic, upon Bayard Taylor — the sin of excessive rhetoricianism — is, in some measure, chargeable to Wallace. He, now and then, permits enthusiasm to hurry him into bombast; but at this point he is rapidly improving; and, if not disheartened by the cowardly neglect of those who dare not praise a poetical aspirant with genius and without influence, will soon rank as one of the very noblest of American poets. In fact, he is so now.

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ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET

MRS. ELLETT, or ELLET, has been long before the public as an author. Having contributed largely to the newspapers and other periodicals in her youth, she first made her *début*, on a more comprehensive scale, as the writer of "Teresa Contarini," a five-act tragedy, which had considerable merit, but was withdrawn after its first night of representation at the Park. This occurred at some period previous to the year 1834; the precise date I am unable to remember. The ill success of the play had little effect in repressing the ardor of the poetess, who has since furnished numerous papers to the magazines. Her articles are, for the most part, in the *rifacimento* way, and, although no doubt composed in good faith, have the disadvantage of looking as if hashed up for just so much money as they will bring. The charge of wholesale plagiarism which has been adduced against Mrs. Ellett, I confess that I have not felt sufficient interest in her works to investigate — and am therefore bound to believe it unfounded. In person, short and much inclined to *embonpoint*.

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AMELIA WELBY

MRS. AMELIA WELBY has nearly all the imagination of Maria del Occidente, with a more refined taste; and nearly all the passion of Mrs. Norton, with a nicer ear, and (what is surprising) equal art. Very few American poets are at all comparable with her in the true poetic qualities. As for our *poetesses* (an absurd but necessary word), few of them approach her.

With some modifications, this little poem would do honor to any one living or dead: —

"The moon within our casement beams,
Our blue-eyed babe hath dropped to sleep,
And I have left it to its dreams
Amid the shadows deep,
To muse beside the silver tide
Whose waves are rippling at thy side.

"It is a still and lovely spot
Where they have laid thee down to rest;
The white rose and forget-me-not
Bloom sweetly on thy breast,
And birds and streams with liquid lull
Have made the stillness beautiful.

"And softly thro' the forest bars
Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
Float ever in, like wingèd stars,
Amid the purpling glooms:
Their sweet songs, borne from tree to tree,
Thrill the light leaves with melody.

"Alas! the very path I trace,
In happier hours thy footsteps made;
This spot was once thy resting-place;
Within the silent shade

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Thy white hand trained the fragrant bough
That drops its blossoms o'er me now.

"'T was here at eve we used to rove;
'T was here I breathed my whispered vows,
And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
Beneath the apple-boughs.
Our hearts had melted into one,
But Death undid what Love had done.

"Alas! too deep a weight of thought
Had filled thy heart in youth's sweet hour;
It seemed with love and bliss o'erfraught;
As fleeting passion-flower
Unfolding 'neath a southern sky,
To blossom soon and soon to die.

"Yet in these calm and blooming bowers,
I seem to see thee still,
Thy breath seems floating o'er the flowers,
Thy whisper on the hill;
The clear faint star-light and the sea
Are whispering to my heart of thee.

"No more thy smiles my heart rejoice —
Yet still I start to meet thine eye,
And call upon the low sweet voice
That gives me no reply,
And list within my silent door
For the light feet that come no more."

In a critical mood I would speak of these stanzas thus: — The subject has *nothing* of originality: — A widower muses by the grave of his wife. Here then is a great demerit; for originality of theme, if not absolutely first sought, should be sought among the first. Nothing is more clear than this proposition, although denied by the chlorine critics (the grass-green). The desire of the new is an element of the soul. The most exquisite pleasures grow dull in repetition. A strain of music enchants. Heard a

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second time it pleases. Heard a tenth, it does not displease. We hear it a twentieth, and ask ourselves why we admired. At the fiftieth it induces ennui, at the hundredth, disgust.

Mrs. Welby's theme is, therefore, radically faulty so far as originality is concerned ; but of common themes, it is one of the very best among the class *passionate.* True passion is prosaic — homely. Any strong mental emotion stimulates *all* the mental faculties; thus grief the imagination ; but in proportion as the effect is strengthened, the cause surceases. The excited fancy triumphs ; the grief is subdued, chastened, is no longer grief. In this mood we are poetic, and it is clear that a poem now written will be poetic in the exact ratio of its dispassion. A passionate poem is a contradiction in terms. When I say, then, that Mrs. Welby's stanzas are good among the class *passionate* (using the term commonly and falsely applied), I mean that her tone is properly subdued, and is not so much the tone of passion as of a gentle and melancholy regret, interwoven with a pleasant sense of the natural loveliness surrounding the lost in the tomb, and a memory of her human beauty while alive. Elegiac poems should either assume this character, or dwell purely on the beauty (moral or physical) of the departed ; or, better still, utter the notes of triumph. I have endeavored to carry out this latter idea in some verses which I have called "Lenore."

Those who object to the proposition that poetry and passion are discordant, would cite Mrs. Welby's poem as an instance of a passionate one. It is precisely similar to the hundred others which have been cited for like purpose. But it is not passionate ; and for this reason (with others having regard to her fine

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genius) it is poetical. The critics upon this topic display an amusing *ignoratio elenchi.*

Dismissing originality and tone, I pass to the general handling, than which nothing could be more pure, more natural, or more judicious. The perfect keeping of the various points is admirable, and the result is entire unity of impression, or effect. The time, a moonlight night; the locality of the grave; the passing thither from the cottage, and the conclusion of the theme with the return to "the silent door;" the babe left, meanwhile, "to its dreams;" the "white rose and forget-me-not" upon the breast of the entombed; the "birds and streams, with liquid lull, that make the stillness beautiful;" the birds whose songs "thrill the light leaves with melody," — all these are appropriate and lovely conceptions — only quite unoriginal — and (be it observed) the higher order of genius should and will combine the original with that which is *natural*, not in the vulgar sense (ordinary), but in the artistic sense which has reference to the *general intention of Nature.* We have this combination well effected in the lines: —

> "And softly through the forest bars
> Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
> Float ever in, like winged stars,
> Amid the purpling glooms,"

which are, unquestionably, the finest in the poem.

The reflections suggested by the scene, commencing,

> "Alas! the very path I trace,"

are, also, something more than merely natural, and are richly ideal; especially the cause assigned for the early death, and

> "The fragrant bough
> That drops its blossoms o'er me now."

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The two concluding stanzas are remarkable examples of common fancies rejuvenated, and etherealized by grace of expression and melody of rhythm.

The "light lovely shapes" in the third stanza (however beautiful in themselves) are defective, when viewed in reference to the "birds" of the stanza preceding. The topic "birds" is dismissed in the one paragraph to be resumed in the other.

"Drops," in the last line of the fourth stanza, is improperly used in an active sense. "To drop" is a neuter verb. An apple drops; we let the apple fall.

The repetition ("seemed," "seem," "seems") in the sixth and seventh stanzas is ungraceful; so also that of "heart," in the last line of the seventh, and the first of the eighth. The words "breathed" and "whispered," in the second line of the fifth stanza, have a force too nearly identical. "'Neath," just below, is an awkward contraction. All contractions are awkward. It is no paradox, that the more prosaic the construction of verse, the better. Inversions should be dismissed. The most forcible lines are the most direct. Mrs. Welby owes three-fourths of her power (so far as style is concerned) to her freedom from these vulgar and particularly English errors, elision and inversion. "O'er" is, however, too often used by her in place of "over," and "'t was" for "it was." We see instances here. The only inversions, strictly speaking, are,

"The moon within our casement beams,"

and,

"Amid the shadows deep."

The versification throughout is unusually good. Nothing can excel,

"And birds and streams with liquid lull
Have made the stillness beautiful"

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"And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
Beneath the apple-boughs"

or, the whole of the concluding stanza, if we leave out of view the unpleasant repetition of "And" at the commencement of the third and fifth lines. "Thy white hand trained" (see stanza the fourth) involves four consonants, that unite with difficulty — *ndtr* — and the harshness is rendered more apparent by the employment of the spondee, "hand trained," in place of an iambus. "Melody" is a feeble termination of the third stanza's last line. The syllable *dy* is not full enough to sustain the rhyme. All these endings, liber*ty*, proper*ty*, happi*ly*, and the like, however justified by authority, are grossly objectionable. Upon the whole, there are some poets in America (Bryant and Sprague, for example) who equal Mrs. Welby in the negative merits of that limited versification which they chiefly affect — the iambic pentameter; but nóne equal her in the richer and positive merits of rhythmical variety, conception, invention. They, in the old routine, rarely err. She often surprises, and always delights, by novel, rich, and accurate combination of the ancient musical expressions.

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THE DAVIDSONS

THE name of LUCRETIA DAVIDSON is familiar to all readers of poetry. Dying at the early age of seventeen, she has been rendered famous not less, and certainly not more, by her own precocious genius than by three memorable biographies — one by President Morse, of the American Society of Arts, another by Miss Sedgwick, and a third by Robert Southey. Mr. Irving had formed an acquaintance with some of her relatives, and thus, while in Europe, took great interest in all that was said or written of his young countrywoman. Upon his return to America, he called upon Mrs. Davidson, and then, in 1833, first saw the subject of the memoir now before us, a fairy-like child of eleven. Three years afterwards he met with her again, and then found her in delicate health. Three years having again elapsed, the manuscripts which form the basis of the present volume were placed in his hands by Mrs. Davidson, as all that remained of her daughter.

Few books have interested us more profoundly. Yet the interest does not appertain solely to Margaret. "In fact, the narrative," says Mr. Irving, "will be found almost as illustrative of the character of the mother as of the child; they were singularly identified in taste, feeling, and pursuits; tenderly entwined together by maternal and filial affection, they reflected an inexpressibly touching grace and interest upon each other by this holy relationship, and, to my mind, it would be marring one of the most beautiful and affecting groups in modern literature, to sunder them."

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In these words the biographer conveys no more than a just idea of the exquisite loveliness of the picture here presented to view.

The manuscripts handed Mr. Irving have been suffered, in a great measure, to tell their own thrilling tale. There has been no injudicious attempt at mere authorship. The compiler has confined himself to chronological arrangement of his memoranda, and to such simple and natural comments as serve to bind rather than to illustrate where no illustration was needed. These memoranda consist of relations by Mrs. Davidson of the infantine peculiarities of her daughter, and of her habits and general thoughts in more matured life, intermingled with letters from the young poetess to intimate friends. There is also a letter from the bereaved mother to Miss Sedgwick, detailing the last moments of the child — a letter so full of all potent nature, so full of minute beauty and truth and pathos, that to read it without tears would be to prove one's self less than human.

The "Poetical Remains" of this young creature, who perished (of consumption) in her sixteenth year, occupy about two hundred pages of a somewhat closely printed octavo. The longest poem is called "Lenore," and consists of some two thousand lines, varying in metre from the ordinary octosyllabic to the four-footed, or twelve-syllabled iambic. The story, which is a romantic love-tale, not ill-conceived in its incidents, is told with a skill which might put more practised bards to the blush, and with occasional bursts of the truest poetic fire. But although as indicative of her future power, it is the most important, as it is the longest of her productions, yet, as a whole, it is not equal to some of her shorter compositions. It

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was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, and (as we glean from the biography) after patient reflection, with much care, and with a high resolve to do something for fame. As the work of so mere a child, it is unquestionably wonderful. Its length, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and completeness, will impress the metaphysician most forcibly, when surveying the capacities of its author. Powers are here brought into play which are the last to be matured. For fancy we might have looked, and for the lower evidences of skill in a perfect versification and the like, but hardly for what we see in "Lenore."

Yet remarkable as this production is, from the pen of a girl of fifteen, it is by no means so incomprehensible as are some of the shorter pieces. We have known instances — rarely, to be sure — but still we have known instances when finer poems in every respect than "Lenore" have been written by children of as immature age; but we look around us in vain for anything composed at eight years, which can bear comparison with the lines subjoined: —

TO MAMMA

"Farewell, dear mother, for a while
I must resign thy plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of woe,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

"May the Almighty Father spread
His sheltering wings above thy head.
It is not long that we must part,
Then cheer thy downcast drooping heart.

"Remember, oh! remember me,
Unceasing is my love for thee!
When death shall sever earthly ties,
When thy loved form all senseless lies,

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"Oh! that my form with thine could flee,
And roam through wide eternity;
Could tread with thee the courts of heaven,
And count the brilliant stars of even."

Nor are these stanzas, written at ten, in any degree less remarkable: —

MY NATIVE LAKE

"Thy verdant banks, thy lucid stream,
Lit by the sun's resplendent beam,
Reflect each bending tree so light
Upon thy bounding bosom bright.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

"The little isles that deck thy breast,
And calmly on thy bosom rest,
How often, in my childish glee,
I 've sported round them, bright and free!
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

"How oft I 've watched the freshening shower
Bending the summer tree and flower
And felt my little heart beat high
As the bright rainbow graced the sky!
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

"And shall I never see thee more,
My native lake, my much-loved shore;
And must I bid a long adieu,
My dear, my infant home, to you?
Shall I not see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain?"

In the way of criticism upon these extraordinary compositions, Mr. Irving has attempted little, and, in general, he seems more affected by the loveliness and the purity of the child than even by the genius she

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has evinced, however highly he may have estimated this latter. In respect, however, to a poem entitled "My Sister Lucretia," he thus speaks: "We have said that the example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her, and no better proof can be given of it than in the following lines, which breathe the heavenly aspirations of her pure young spirit, *in strains to us quite unearthly. We may have read poetry more artificially perfect in its structure, but never any more truly divine in its inspiration.*" The nature of inspiration is disputable, and we will not pretend to assert that Mr. Irving is in the wrong. His words, however, in their hyperbole, do wrong to his subject, and would be hyperbole still, if applied to the most exalted poets of all time.

The analogies of Nature are universal; and just as the most rapidly growing herbage is the most speedy in its decay, just as the ephemera struggles to perfection in a day only to perish in that day's decline, so the mind is early matured only to be early in its decadence; and when we behold in the eye of infancy the soul of the adult, it is but indulging in a day-dream to hope for any farther proportionate development. Should the prodigy survive to ripe age, a mental imbecility, not far removed from idiocy itself, is too frequently the result. From this rule the exceptions are rare indeed; but it should be observed that, when the exception does occur, the intellect is of a Titan cast even to the days of its extreme senility, and acquires renown not in one but in all the wide fields of fancy and of reason.

Lucretia Maria Davidson, the elder of the two sweet sisters who have acquired so much of fame prema-

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turely, had not, like Margaret, an object of poetical emulation in her own family. In her genius, be it what it may, there is more of self-dependence, less of the imitative. Her mother's generous romance of soul may have stimulated, but did not instruct. Thus, although she has actually given less evidence of power (in our opinion) than Margaret — less written proof — still its indication must be considered at higher value. Both perished at sixteen. Margaret, we think, has left the better poems — certainly, the more precocious — while Lucretia evinces more unequivocally the soul of the poet. We have quoted in full some stanzas composed by the former at eight years of age. The latter's earliest effusions are dated at fourteen. Yet the first compositions of the two seem to us of nearly equal merit.

The most elaborate production of Margaret is "Lenore." It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, after patient reflection, with much care, and with all that high resolve to do something for fame with which the reputation of her sister had inspired her. Under such circumstances, and with the early poetical education which she could not have failed to receive, we confess that, granting her a trifle more than average talent, it would have been rather a matter for surprise had she produced a worse than had she produced a better poem than "Lenore." Its *length*, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and its completeness (and all these are points having reference to artistical *knowledge* and perseverance) will impress the critic more favorably than its fancy, or any other indication of poetic power. In all the more important qualities,

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we have seen far, very far finer poems than "Lenore" written at a much earlier age than fifteen.

"Amir Khan," the longest and chief composition of Lucretia, has been long known to the reading public. Partly through Professor Morse, yet no doubt partly through their own merits, the poems found their way to Southey, who, after his peculiar fashion, and not unmindful of his previous *furores* in the case of Kirke White, Chatterton, and others of precocious ability, or at least celebrity, thought proper to *review* them in the "Quarterly." This was at a period when we humbled ourselves, with a subserviency which would have been disgusting had it not been ludicrous, before the crudest critical *dicta* of Great Britain. It pleased the laureate, after some squibbing in the way of demurrer, to speak of the book in question as follows: — "In these poems there is enough of originality, enough of aspiration, enough of conscious energy, enough of growing power to warrant any expectations, however sanguine, which the patrons and the friends and parents of the deceased could have formed." Meaning nothing, or rather meaning anything, as we choose to interpret it, this sentence was still sufficient (and in fact the half of it would have been more than sufficient) to establish upon an immovable basis the reputation of Miss Davidson in America. Thenceforward any examination of her true claims to distinction was considered little less than a declaration of heresy. Nor does the awe of the laureate's *ipse dixit* seem even yet to have entirely subsided. "The genius of Lucretia Davidson," says Miss Sedgwick, "has had the meed of far more authoritative praise than ours; the following tribute is from the 'London Quarterly Review.'" What this

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lady — for whom and for whose opinion we still have the highest respect — can mean by calling the praise of Southey "more authoritative" than her own is a point we shall not pause to determine. *Her* praise is at least honest, or we hope so. Its "authority" is in exact proportion with each one's estimate of her judgment. But it would not do to say all this of the author of "Thalaba." It would not do to say it in the hearing of men who are sane, and who, being sane, have perused the leading articles in the "London Quarterly Review" during the ten or fifteen years prior to that period when Robert Southey, having concocted "The Doctor," took definite leave of his wits. In fact, for anything that we have yet seen or heard to the contrary, the opinion of the laureate, in respect to the poem of "Amir Khan," is a matter still only known to Robert Southey. But were it known to all the world, as Miss Sedgwick supposes with so charmingly innocent an air; we mean to say were it really an honest opinion, — this "authoritative praise," — still it would be worth, in the eyes of every sensible person, only just so much as it demonstrates, or makes a show of demonstrating. Happily the day has gone by, and we trust forever, when men are content to swear blindly by the words of a master, poet-laureate though he be. But what Southey says of the poem is at best an opinion and no more. What Miss Sedgwick says of it is very much in the same predicament. "Amir Khan," she writes, "has long been before the public, but we think it has suffered from a general and very natural distrust of precocious genius. The versification is graceful, the story beautifully developed, and the orientalism well sustained. *We think it would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in*

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the meridian of their fame; as the production of a girl of fifteen it seems prodigious." The cant of a kind heart when betraying into error a naturally sound judgment is perhaps the only species of cant in the world not altogether contemptible.

We yield to no one in warmth of admiration for the personal character of these sweet sisters, as that character is depicted by the mother, by Miss Sedgwick, and by Mr. Irving. But it costs us no effort to distinguish that which, in our heart, is love of their worth, from that which, in our intellect, is appreciation of their poetic ability. With the former, as critic, we have nothing to do. The distinction is one too obvious for comment; and its observation would have spared us much twaddle on the part of the commentators upon "Amir Khan."

We will endeavor to convey, as concisely as possible, some idea of this poem as it exists, not in the fancy of the enthusiastic, but in fact. It includes four hundred and forty lines. The metre is chiefly octosyllabic. At one point it is varied by a casual introduction of an anapæst in the first and second foot; at another (in a song) by seven stanzas of four lines each, rhyming alternately; the metre anapæstic of four feet alternating with three. The versification is always good, so far as the meagre written rules of our English prosody extend; that is to say, there is seldom a syllable too much or too little; but long and short syllables are placed at random, and a crowd of consonants sometimes renders a line unpronounceable. For example: —

> "He loved, — and oh, he loved so well,
> *That sorrow scarce dared break the spell.*"

At times, again, the rhythm lapses, in the most

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inartistical manner, and evidently without design, from one species to another altogether incongruous; as, for example, in the sixth line of these eight, where the tripping anapæstic stumbles into the demure iambic, recovering itself, even more awkwardly, in the conclusion: —

"Bright Star of the Morning! this bosom is cold —
I was forced from my native shade,
And I wrapped me around with my mantle's fold,
A sad, mournful Circassian maid!
And I then vowed that rapture should never move
This changeless cheek, this rayless eye,
And I then vowed to feel neither bliss nor love,
But I vowed I would meet thee and die."

Occasionally the versification rises into melody and even strength; as here, —

"'T was at the hour when Peris love
To gaze upon the Heaven above,
Whose portals, bright with many a gem,
Are closed, forever closed, *on them.*"

Upon the whole, however, it is feeble, vacillating, and ineffective; giving token of having been "touched up," by the hand of a friend, from a much worse into its present condition. Such rhymes as "floor" and "shower" — "ceased" and "breast" — "shade" and "spread" — "brow" and "woe" — "clear" and "far" — "clear" and "air" — "morning" and "dawning" — "forth" and "earth" — "step" and "deep" — "Khan" and "hand" — are constantly occurring; and although, certainly, we should not, *as a general rule*, expect better things from a girl of sixteen, we still look in vain, and with something very much akin to a smile, for aught even approaching that "*marvellous ease and grace of versification*" about which Miss Sedgwick, in the benevolence of her heart, discourses. 298

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Nor does the story, to our dispassionate apprehension, appear "beautifully developed." It runs thus: — Amir Khan, Subahdar of Cachemere, weds a Circassian slave, who, cold as a statue and as obstinately silent, refuses to return his love. The Subahdar applies to a magician, who gives him

> "a pensive flower
> Gathered at midnight's magic hour;"

the effect of whose perfume renders him apparently lifeless while still in possession of all his senses. Amreeta, the slave, supposing her lover dead, gives way to clamorous grief, and reveals the secret love which she has long borne her lord, but refused to divulge because a slave. Amir Khan hereupon revives, and all trouble is at an end.

Of course, no one at all read in Eastern fable will be willing to give Miss Davidson credit for *originality* in the conception of this little story; and if she have claim to merit at all, as regards it, that claim must be founded upon the manner of narration. But it will be at once evident that the most naked outline alone can be given in the compass of four hundred and forty lines. The tale is, in sober fact, told very much as any young person might be expected to tell it. The strength of the narrator is wholly laid out upon a description of moonlight (in the usual style) with which the poem commences, upon a second description of moonlight (in precisely the same manner) with which a second division commences, and in a third description of the hall in which the entranced Subahdar reposes. This is all — absolutely all; or at least the rest has the nakedness of mere catalogue. We recognize, throughout, the poetic sentiment, but little

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— very little — of poetic power. We see occasional gleams of imagination; for example: —

> "And every crystal cloud of Heaven
> Bowed as it passed the queen of even."
>
> "Amreeta was cold as the marble floor
> That glistens beneath the nightly shower."
>
> "At that calm hour when Peris love
> To gaze upon the Heaven above,
> Whose portals, bright with many a gem,
> Are closed, forever closed, *on them*."
>
> "The Subahdar with noiseless step
> Rushed like the night-breeze o'er the deep."

We look in vain for another instance worth quoting. But were the fancy seen in these examples observable either in the general conduct or in the incidents of the narrative, we should not feel obliged to disagree so unequivocally with that opinion which pronounces this clever little production "*one which would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame!*"

"As the work of a girl of sixteen," most assuredly we do not think it "prodigious." In regard to it we may repeat what we said of "Lenore," — that we have seen finer poems in every respect, written by children of more immature age. It is a creditable composition; nothing beyond this. And, in so saying, we shall startle none but the brainless, and the adopters of ready-made ideas. We are convinced that we express the unuttered sentiment of every educated individual who has read the poem. Nor, having given the plain facts of the case, do we feel called upon to proffer any apology for our flat refusal to play ditto either to Miss Sedgwick, to Mr. Irving, or to Mr. Southey.

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ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH

THIS is a very pretty little volume, neatly printed, handsomely bound, embracing some two hundred pages 16mo., and introduced to the public, somewhat unnecessarily, in a preface by Dr. Rufus W. Griswold. In this preface we find some few memoranda of the personal authoress, with some critical opinions in relation to her poems. The memoranda are meagre. A much more interesting account of Mrs. Smith is given by Mr. John Neal, and was included by Mr. John Keese in the introduction to a former collection of her works. The critical opinions may as well be here quoted, at least in part. Dr. Griswold says: —

"Seeking expression, yet shrinking from notoriety, and with a full share of that respect for a just fame and appreciation which belongs to every high-toned mind, yet oppressed by its shadow when circumstance is the impelling motive of publication, the writings of Mrs. Smith might well be supposed to betray great inequality; still in her many contributions to the magazines, it is remarkable how few of her pieces display the usual carelessness and haste of magazine articles. As an essayist especially, while graceful and lively, she is compact and vigorous; while through poems, essays, tales, and criticisms (for her industrious pen seems equally skilful and happy in each of these departments of literature), through all her manifold writings, indeed, there runs the same beautiful vein of philosophy, viz.: — that truth and goodness of themselves impart a holy light to the mind which gives it a power far above mere intellectuality; that the highest order of human in-

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telligence springs from the moral and not the reasoning faculties. . . . Mrs. Smith's most popular poem is 'The Acorn,' which, though inferior in high inspiration to 'The Sinless Child,' is by many preferred for its happy play of fancy and proper finish. Her sonnets, of which she has written many, have not yet been as much admired as 'The April Rain,' 'The Brook,' and other fugitive pieces, which we find in many popular collections."

"The Sinless Child" was originally published in the "Southern Literary Messenger," where it at once attracted much attention from the novelty of its conception and the general grace and purity of its style. Undoubtedly it is one of the most original of American poems — surpassed in this respect, we think, only by Maria del Occidente's "Bride of Seven." Of course, we speak merely of long poems. We have had in this country many brief fugitive pieces far excelling in this most important point (originality) either "The Bride of Seven" or "The Sinless Child" — far excelling, indeed, any transatlantic poems. After all, it is chiefly in works of what is absurdly termed "sustained effort" that we fall in any material respect behind our progenitors.

"The Sinless Child" is quite long, including more than two hundred stanzas, generally of eight lines. The metre throughout is iambic tetrameter, alternating with trimeter — in other words, lines of four iambuses alternate with lines of three. The variations from this order are rare. The design of the poem is very imperfectly made out. The conception is much better than the execution. "A simple cottage maiden, Eva, given to the world in the widowhood of one parent and the angelic existence of the other, . . . is found from her birth to be as meek and gentle as are those

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pale flowers that look imploringly upon us. . . . She is gifted with the power of interpreting the beautiful mysteries of our earth. . . . For her the song of the bird is not merely the gushing forth of a nature too full of blessedness to be silent . . . the humblest plant, the simplest insect, is each alive with truth. . . . She sees the world not merely with mortal eyes, but looks within to the pure internal life of which the outward is but a type," etc., etc. These passages are taken from the Argument prefixed to Part I. The general thesis of the poetess may, perhaps, be stated as the demonstration that the superior wisdom is moral rather than intellectual; but it may be doubted whether her subject was ever precisely apparent to herself. In a word, she seems to have vacillated between several conceptions, the only very definite idea being that of extreme beauty and purity in a child. At one time we fancy her, for example, attempting to show that the condition of absolute sanctity is one through which mortality may know all things and hold converse with the angels; at another we suppose it her purpose to "create" (in critical language) an entirely novel being, a something that is neither angel nor mortal, nor yet fairy in the ordinary sense — in a word, an original *ens*. Besides these two prominent fancies, however, there are various others which seem continually flitting in and out of the poet's vision, so that her whole work has an indeterminate air. Of this she apparently becomes conscious towards the conclusion, and in the final stanza endeavors to remedy the difficulty by summing up her design: —

"The sinless child, with mission high,
Awhile to earth was given,

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To show us that our world should be
The vestibule of heaven.
Did we but in the holy light
Of truth and goodness rise,
We might communion hold with God
And spirits from the skies."

The conduct of the narrative is scarcely more determinate — if, indeed, "The Sinless Child" can be said to include a narrative at all. The poem is occupied in its first part with a description of the child, her saintly character, her lone wanderings, the lessons she deduces from all animal and vegetable things, and her communings with the angels. We have then discussions with her mother, who is made to introduce episodical tales, one of "Old Richard," another called "The Defrauded Heart" (a tale of a miser), and another entitled "The Stepmother." Towards the end of the poem a lover, Alfred Linne, is brought upon the scene. He has been reckless and sinful, but is reclaimed by the heavenly nature of Eva. He finds her sleeping in a forest. At this point occur some of the finest and most characteristic passages of the poem.

"Unwonted thought, unwonted calm
Upon his spirit fell;
For he unwittingly had sought
Young Eva's hallowed dell,
And breathed that atmosphere of love,
Around her path that grew:
That evil from her steps repelled,
The good unto her drew."

[*Mem.* — The last quatrain of this stanza would have been more readily comprehended if punctuated and written thus: —

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"And breathed that atmosphere of love
Around her path that grew —
That evil from her steps repelled —
That good unto her drew."

We may as well observe here, too, that although neatly printed, the volume abounds in typographical errors that very frequently mar the sense — as at page 66, for example, where "come" (near the bottom) is improperly used for "came," and "scorching" (second line from the top) is substituted for "searching." We proceed with Albert's discovery of Eva in the wood.]

"Now Eva opes her child-like eyes
And lifts her tranquil head;
And Albert, like a guilty thing,
Had from her presence fled.
But Eva marked his troubled brow,
His sad and thoughtful eyes,
As if they sought yet shrank to hold
Their converse with the skies."

Communion with the skies — would have been far better. It seems strange to us that any one should have overlooked the word.

"And all her kindly nature stirred,
She prayed him to remain;
Well conscious that the pure have power,
To balm much human pain.
There mingled too, as in a dream,
About brave Albert Linne,
A real and ideal form,
Her soul had formed within."

We give the punctuation here as we find it; — it is incorrect throughout, interfering materially with a proper understanding of the passage. There should be a comma after "And" in the first line, a comma in place of the semicolon at the end of the second line,

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no point at the end of the third line, a comma after "mingled," and none after "form." These seeming minutiæ are of real importance; but we refer to them, in case of "The Sinless Child," because here the aggregate of this species of minor error is unusually remarkable. Of course it is the proof-reader or editor, and not Mrs. Smith, who is to blame.

"Her trusting hand fair Eva laid
In that of Albert Linne,
And for one trembling moment turned
Her gentle thoughts within.
Deep tenderness was in the glance
That rested on his face,
As if her woman-heart had found
Its own abiding-place.

"And evermore to him it seemed
Her voice more liquid grew —
'Dear youth, thy soul and mine are one;
One source their being drew!
And they must mingle evermore —
Thy thoughts of love and me
Will, as a light, thy footsteps guide
To life and mystery.'

"There was a sadness in her tone,
But love unfathomed deep;
As from the centre of the soul
Where the divine may sleep;
Prophetic was the tone and look,
And Albert's noble heart
Sank with a strange foreboding dread
Lest Eva should depart.

"And when she bent her timid eyes
As she beside him knelt,
The pressure of her sinless lips
Upon his brow he felt,

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And all of earth and all of sin
Fled from her sainted side;
She, the pure virgin of the soul,
Ordained young Albert's bride."

It would, perhaps, have been out of keeping with the more obvious plan of the poem to make Eva really the bride of Albert. She does not wed him, but dies tranquilly in bed, soon after the spiritual union in the forest. "Eva," says the Argument of Part VII., "hath fulfilled her destiny. Material things can no farther minister to the growth of her spirit. That waking of the soul to its own deep mysteries — its oneness with another — has been accomplished. A human soul is perfected." At this point the poem may be said to have its conclusion.

In looking back at its general plan, we cannot fail to see traces of high poetic capacity. The first point to be commended is the reach or aim of the poetess. She is evidently discontented with the bald routine of common-place themes, and originality has been with her a principal object. In *all* cases of fictitious composition it should be the *first* object — by which we do not mean to say that it can ever be considered as the most important. But, *ceteris paribus*, every class of fiction is the better for originality; every writer is false to his own interest if he fails to avail himself, at the outset, of the effect which is certainly and invariably derivable from the great element, novelty.

The execution of "The Sinless Child" is, as we have already said, inferior to its conception — that is, to its conception as it floated, rather than steadily existed, in the brain of the authoress. She enables us to see that she has very narrowly missed one of those happy "creations" which now and then immor-

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talize the poet. With a good deal more of deliberate thought before putting pen to paper, with a good deal more of the constructive ability, and with more rigorous discipline in the minor merits of style, and of what is termed in the school-prospectuses composition, Mrs. Smith would have made of "The Sinless Child" one of the best, if not the very best of American poems. While speaking of the execution, or, more properly, the conduct of the work, we may as well mention, first, the obviousness with which the stories introduced by Eva's mother are interpolated, or episodical; it is permitted every reader to see that they have no natural connection with the true theme; and, indeed, there can be no doubt that they were written long before the main narrative was projected. In the second place, we must allude to the artificiality of the "Arguments," or introductory prose passages, prefacing each Part of the poem. Mrs. Smith had no sounder reason for employing them than that Milton and the rest of the epicists have employed them before. If it be said that they are necessary for the proper comprehension of a poem, we reply that this is saying nothing for *them*, but merely much against the poem which demands them as a necessity. Every work of art should contain within itself all that is required for its own comprehension. An "Argument" is but another form of the "This is an ox" subjoined to the portrait of an animal with horns. But in making these objections to the management of "The Sinless Child," we must not be understood as insisting upon them as at all material, in view of the lofty merit of originality — a merit which pervades and invigorates the whole work, and which, in our opinion at least, is far, very far more than sufficient to compensate for

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every inartisticality of construction. A work of art may be admirably constructed, and yet be null as regards every essentiality of that truest art which is but the happiest development of nature; but no work of art can embody within itself a proper *originality* without giving the plainest manifestations of the creative spirit, or, in more common parlance, of *genius* in its author. The originality of "The Sinless Child" would cover a multitude of greater defects than Mrs. Smith ever committed, and must forever entitle it to the admiration and respect of every competent critic.

As regards detached passages, we think that the episode of "The Stepmother" may be fairly cited as the best in the poem: —

"You speak of Hobert's second wife, a lofty dame and bold;
I like not her forbidding air, and forehead high and cold.
The orphans have no cause for grief; she dare not give it now,
Though nothing but a ghostly fear her heart of pride could bow.

"One night the boy his mother called; they heard him weeping say,
'Sweet mother, kiss poor Eddy's cheek and wipe his tears away.'
Red grew the lady's brow with rage, and yet she feels a strife
Of anger and of terror, too, at thought of that dead wife.

"Wild roars the wind; the lights burn blue; the watch-dog howls with fear;
Loud neighs the steed from out the stall. What form is gliding near?
No latch is raised, no step is heard, but a phantom fills the space —
A sheeted spectre from the dead, with cold and leaden face.

"What boots it that no other eye beheld the shade appear?
The guilty lady's guilty soul beheld it plain and clear.
It slowly glides within the room and sadly looks around,
And, stooping, kissed her daughter's cheek with lips that gave no sound.

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" Then softly on the step-dame's arm she laid a death-cold hand,
Yet it hath scorched within the flesh like to a burning brand;
And gliding on with noiseless foot, o'er winding stair and hall,
She nears the chamber where is heard her infant's trembling call.

" She smoothed the pillow where he lay, she warmly tucked the bed,
She wiped his tears and stroked the curls that clustered round his head.
The child, caressed, unknowing fear, hath nestled him to rest;
The mother folds her wings beside — the mother from the blest!"

The metre of this episode has been altered from its original form, and, we think, improved by the alteration. Formerly, in place of four lines of seven iambuses, the stanza consisted of eight lines — a line of four iambuses alternating with one of three — a more ordinary and artificial, therefore a less desirable arrangement. In the last three quatrains there is an awkward vacillation between the present and perfect tenses, as in the words "beheld," "glides," "kissed," "laid," "hath scorched," "smoothed," "wiped," "hath nestled," "folds." These petty objections, of course, will by no means interfere with the reader's appreciation of the episode, with his admiration of its pathos, its delicacy, and its grace — we had almost forgotten to say of its pure and high imagination.

We proceed to cull, from "The Sinless Child," a few brief but happy passages at random: —

" Gentle she was and full of love,
With voice exceeding sweet,
And eyes of dove-like tenderness
Where joy and sadness meet."

" with calm and tranquil eye
That turned instinctively to seek
The blueness of the sky."

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"*Bright missals from angelic throngs*
In every by-way left —
How were the earth of glory shorn
Were it of flowers bereft!"

"And wheresoe'er the weary heart
Turns in its dim despair,
The meek-eyed blossom upward looks,
Inviting it to prayer."

"The very winds were hushed to peace
Within the quiet dell,
Or murmured through the rustling bough
Like breathings of a shell."

"The mystery of life;
Its many hopes, its many fears,
Its sorrow and its strife —
A spirit to behold in all
To guide, admonish, cheer, —
Forever, in all time and place,
To feel an angel near."

"I may not scorn the spirit's rights,
For I have seen it rise,
All written o'er with thought, thought, thought,
As with a thousand eyes!"

"And there are things that blight the soul
As with a mildew blight,
And in the temple of the Lord
Put out the blessed light."

It is in the point of passages such as these, in their vigor, terseness, and novelty, combined with exquisite delicacy, that the more obvious merit of the poem consists. A thousand such *quotable* paragraphs are interspersed through the work, and of themselves would be sufficient to insure its popularity. But we repeat that a far loftier excellence lies *perdu* amid the minor deficiencies of "The Sinless Child."

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The other poems of the volume are, as entire compositions, nearer perfection, but, in general, have less of the true poetical element. "The Acorn" is perfect as regards its construction — although, to be sure, the design is so simple that it could scarcely be marred in its execution. The idea is the old one of detailing the progress of a plant from its germ to its maturity, with the uses and general vicissitudes to which it is subjected. In this case of the acorn the vicissitudes are well imagined, and the execution is more skilfully managed — is more definite, vigorous, and pronounced, than in the longer poem. The chief of the minor objections is to the rhythm, which is imperfect, vacillating awkwardly between iambuses and anapæsts, after such fashion that it is impossible to decide whether the rhythm in itself — that is, whether the general intention — is anapæstical or iambic. Anapæsts introduced, for the relief of monotone, into an iambic rhythm, are not only admissible but commendable, if not absolutely demanded; but in this case they prevail to such an extent as to overpower the iambic intention, thus rendering the whole versification difficult of comprehension. We give, by way of example, a stanza with the scanning divisions and quantities: —

They came | with gifts | that should life | bestow; |
The dew | and the li | ving air — |
The bane | that should work | its dead | ly woe, |
The lit | tle men | had there; |
In the gray | moss cup | was the mil | dew brought, |
The worm | in a rose- | leaf rolled, |
And ma | ny things | with destruc | tion fraught
That its doom | were quick | ly told. |

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Here iambuses and anapæsts are so nearly balanced that the ear hesitates to receive the rhythm as either anapæstic or iambic, that is, it hesitates to receive it as anything at all. A rhythm should always be distinctly marked by its first foot — that is to say, if the design is iambic, we should commence with an unmistakable iambus, and proceed with this foot until the ear gets fairly accustomed to it before we attempt variation; for which, indeed, there is no *necessity* unless for the relief of monotone. When the rhythm is in this manner thoroughly recognized, we may sparingly vary with anapæsts (or, if the rhythm be trochaic, with dactyls). Spondees, still more sparingly, as absolute discords, may be also introduced either in an iambic or trochaic rhythm. In common with a very large majority of American, and, indeed, of European poets, Mrs. Smith seems to be totally unacquainted with the principles of versification — by which, of course, we mean its *rationale*. Of technical *rules* on the subject there are rather more than enough in our prosodies, and from these abundant rules are deduced the abundant blunders of our poets. There is not a prosody in existence which is worth the paper on which it is printed.

Of the miscellaneous poems included in the volume before us, we greatly prefer "The Summons Answered." It has more of *power*, more of genuine imagination than anything else written by its author. It is a story of three "bacchanals," who, on their way from the scene of their revelry, are arrested by the beckoning of a white hand from the partially unclosing door of a tomb. One of the party obeys the summons. It is the tomb of his wife. We quote the two concluding stanzas: —

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"This restless life with its little fears,
Its hopes that fade so soon,
With its yearning tenderness and tears,
And the burning agony that sears—
The sun gone down at noon —
The spirit crushed to its prison wall,
Mindless of all beside —
This young Richard saw, and felt it all —
Well might the dead abide!

"The crimson light in the east is high,
The hoar-frost coldly gleams,
And Richard chilled to the heart well-nigh,
Hath raised his wildered and bloodshot eye
From that long night of dreams.
He shudders to think of the reckless band
And the fearful oath he swore —
But most he thinks of the clay-cold hand,
That opened the old tomb door."

With the quotation of these really noble passages — noble, because full of the truest poetic energy — we take leave of the fair authoress. She is entitled, beyond doubt, to all, and perhaps to much more than the commendation she has received. Her faults are among the peccadilloes, and her merits among the sterling excellences of the Muse.

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ESTELLE ANNA LEWIS

THE maiden name of MRS. LEWIS was Robinson. She is a native of Baltimore. Her family is one of the best in America. Her father was a distinguished Cuban of English and Spanish parentage, wealthy, influential, and of highly cultivated mind: — from him, perhaps, Mrs. Lewis has inherited the melancholy temperament which so obviously predominates in her writings. Between the death of her father and her present comfortable circumstances, she has undergone many romantic and striking vicissitudes of fortune, which, of course, have not failed to enlarge her knowledge of human nature, and to develop the poetical germ which became manifest in her earliest infancy.

Mrs. Lewis is, perhaps, the best educated, if not the most accomplished of American authoresses — using the word "accomplished" in the ordinary acceptation of that term. She is not only cultivated as respects the usual ornamental acquirements of her sex, but excels as a modern linguist, and very especially as a classical scholar; while her scientific acquisitions are of no common order. Her occasional translations from the more difficult portions of Virgil have been pronounced, by our first Professors, the best of the kind yet accomplished — a commendation which only a thorough classicist can appreciate in its full extent. Her rudimental education was received, in part, at Mrs. Willard's celebrated Academy at Troy; but she is an incessant and very ambitious

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student, and, in this sense, the more important part of her education may be said to have been self-attained.

In character, Mrs. Lewis is everything which can be thought desirable in woman — generous, sensitive, impulsive; enthusiastic in her admiration of Beauty and Virtue, but ardent in her scorn of wrong. The predominant trait of her disposition, as before hinted, is a certain romantic sensibility, bordering upon melancholy, or even gloom. In person, she is distinguished by the grace and dignity of her form, and the nobility of her manner. She has auburn hair, naturally curling, and expressive eyes of dark hazel. Her portrait, by Elliot, which has attracted much attention, is most assuredly no flattering likeness, although admirable as a work of art, and conveying a forcible idea of its accomplished original, so far as regards the *tout ensemble*.

At an early age Miss Robinson was allied in marriage to Mr. S. D. Lewis, attorney and counsellor at law; and soon afterwards they took up their residence in Brooklyn, where they have ever since continued to reside — Mr. Lewis absorbed in the labors of his profession, as she in the pleasurable occupations connected with literature and art.

Her earliest efforts were made in the "Family Magazine," edited by the well-known Solomon Southwick, of Albany. Subsequently she wrote much for various periodicals — in chief part for the "Democratic Review;" but her first appearance before the public in volume-form, was in "The Records of the Heart," issued by the Appletons in 1844. The leading poems in this, are "Florence," "Zenel," "Melpomene," "Laone," "The Last Hour of Sappho," and "The Bride of Guayaquil" — all long and finished compositions.

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"Florence" is, perhaps, the best of the series, upon the whole, although all breathe the true poetical spirit. It is a tale of passion and wild romance, vivid, forcible, and artistical. But a faint idea, of course, can be given of such a poem by an extract; but we cannot refrain from quoting two brief passages as characteristic of the general manner and tone:—

"Morn is abroad; the sun is up;
The dew fills high each lily's cup;
Ten thousand flowerets springing there
Diffuse their incense through the air,
And smiling hail the morning beam;
The fawns plunge panting in the stream,
Or through the vale with light foot spring;
Insect and bird are on the wing,
And all is bright, as when in May
Young Nature holds a holiday."

Again:—

"The waves are smooth, the wind is calm;
Onward the golden stream is gliding
Amid the myrtle and the palm
And ilices its margin hiding;
Now sweeps it o'er the jutting shoals
In murmurs, like despairing souls,
Now deeply, softly, flows along,
Like ancient minstrel's warbling song;
Then slowly, darkly, thoughtfully,
Loses itself in the mighty sea."

Among the minor poems in this collection is "The Forsaken," so widely known and so universally admired. The popular as well as the critical voice ranks it as the most beautiful ballad of its kind ever written.

We have read this little poem more than twenty times, and always with increasing admiration. It is inexpressibly beautiful. No one of real feeling can peruse it without a strong inclination to tears. Its

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irresistible charm is its absolute truth — the unaffected naturalness of its thought. The sentiment which forms the basis of the composition is, perhaps, at once the most universal and the most passionate of sentiments. No human being exists, over the age of fifteen, who has not, in his heart of hearts, a ready echo for all there so pathetically expressed. The essential poetry of the ideas would only be impaired by "foreign ornament." This is a case in which we should be repelled by the mere conventionalities of the Muse. We demand, for such thoughts, the most rigorous simplicity at all points. It will be observed that, strictly speaking, there is not an attempt at "imagery" in the whole poem. All is direct, terse, penetrating. In a word, nothing could be better done. The versification, while in full keeping with the general character of simplicity, has in certain passages a vigorous, trenchant euphony which would confer honor on the most accomplished masters of the art. We refer especially to the lines,

> "And follow me to my long home
> *Solemn and slow.*"

And the quatrain,

> "Could I but know, when I am sleeping
> *Low in the ground,*
> One faithful heart would there be keeping
> *Watch all night round.*"

The initial trochee here, in each instance, substituted for the iambus, produces, so naturally as to seem accidental, a very effective echo of sound to sense. The thought included in the line "And *light* the tomb" should be dwelt upon to be appreciated in its full extent of beauty; and the verses which I have italicised in the last stanza, are poetry — poetry in the

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purest sense of that much misused word. They have power — indisputable power; making us thrill with a sense of their weird magnificence as we read them.

After the publication of the "Records," Mrs. Lewis contributed more continuously to the periodicals of the day — her writings appearing chiefly in the "American Review," and the "Democratic Review," and "Graham's Magazine." In the autumn of 1848, Mr. G. P. Putnam published, in exquisite style, her "Child of the Sea, and Other Poems" — a volume which at once placed its fair authoress in the first rank of American authors. The composition which gives title to this collection is a tale of sea-adventure — of crime, passion, love, and revenge — resembling, in all the nobler poetic elements, the "Corsair" of Lord Byron, from which, however, it widely differs in plot, conduct, manner, and expression. The opening lines not only give a general summary of the design, but serve well to exemplify the ruling merits of the composition: —

"Where blooms the myrtle and the olive flings
Its aromatic breath upon the air;
Where the sad bird of Night forever sings
Meet anthems for the children of Despair,
Who, silently, with wild dishevelled hair,
Stray through those valleys of perpetual bloom;
Where hideous War and Murder from their lair
Stalk forth in awful and terrific gloom,
Rapine and Vice disport on Glory's gilded tomb:

"My fancy pensive pictures youthful Love,
Ill-starred yet trustful, truthful and sublime
As ever angels chronicled above:
The sorrowings of Beauty in her prime;
Virtue's reward; the punishment of Crime;
The dark, inscrutable decrees of Fate;

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Despair untold before in prose or rhyme;
The wrong, the agony, the sleepless hate
That mad the soul and make the bosom desolate."

One of the most distinguishing merits of "The Child of the Sea" is the admirable conduct of its narrative, in which every incident has its proper position, where nothing is inconsequent or incoherent, and where, above all, the rich and vivid interest is never, for a single moment, permitted to flag. How few, even of the most accomplished and skilful of poets, are successful in the management of a story, when that story has to be told in verse. The difficulty is easily analyzed. In all mere narrations there are particulars of the dullest prose, which are inevitable and indispensable, but which serve no other purpose than to bind together the true interest of the incidents — in a word, *explanatory* passages, which are yet to be so "done into verse" as not to let down the imagination from its pride of place. Absolutely to poetize these explanatory passages is beyond the reach of art, for prose, and that of the flattest kind, is their essentiality; but the skill of the artist should be sufficient to gloss them over so as to seem poetry amid the poetry by which they are surrounded. For this end a very consummate art is demanded. Here the tricks of phraseology — quaintnesses — and rhythmical effects, come opportunely into play. Of the species of skill required, Moore, in his "Alciphron," has given us, upon the whole, the happiest exemplification; but Mrs. Lewis has very admirably succeeded in her "Child of the Sea." I am strongly tempted, by way of showing what I mean, to give here a digest of her narrative, with comments; but this would be doing the author injustice, in anticipating the interest of her work.

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The poem, although widely differing in subject from any of Mrs. Lewis's prior compositions, and far superior to any of them in general vigor, artistic skill, and assured certainty of purpose, is nevertheless easily recognizable as the production of the same mind which originated "Florence" and "The Forsaken." We perceive, throughout, the same passion, the same enthusiasm, and the same seemingly reckless abandon of thought and manner which I have already mentioned as characterizing the writer. I should have spoken, also, of a fastidious yet most sensitive and almost voluptuous sense of beauty. These are the *general* traits of "The Child of the Sea;" but undoubtedly the chief value of the poem, to ordinary readers, will be found to lie in the aggregation of its imaginative passages — its quotable points. I give a few of these at random: — the description of sunset upon the Bay of Gibraltar will compare favorably with anything of a similar character ever written: —

> "Fresh blows the breeze on Tarick's *burnished* bay;
> The *silent* sea-mews bend them through the spray;
> *The Beauty-freighted barges bound afar*
> *To the soft music of the gay guitar.*"

I quote further: —

> "the oblivious world of sleep —
> That rayless realm where Fancy never beams,
> *That Nothingness beyond the Land of Dreams.*"

> "Folded his arms across his sable vest,
> *As if to keep the heart within his breast,*
> . . . . . he lingers by the streams,
> Pondering on incommunicable themes."

> "*Nor notes the fawn that tamely by him glides,*
> *The violets lifting up their azure eyes*
> *Like timid virgins whom Love's steps surprise.*"

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"And all is hushed — so still — so silent there
That one might hear an angel wing the air."

"Adown the groves and dewy vales afar
Tinkles the serenader's soft guitar."

"her tender cares,
Her solemn sighs, her silent streaming tears,
Her more than woman's soft solicitude
To soothe his spirit in its frantic mood."

"Now by the crags — then by each pendent bough
Steadies his steps adown the mountain's brow."

"Sinks on his crimson couch, so long unsought,
And floats along the phantom stream of thought."

"Ah, no! for there are times when the sick soul
Lies calm amid the storms that round it roll,
Indifferent to Fate or to what haven
By the terrific tempest it is driven."

"The Dahlias, *leaning from the golden vase,*
Peer pensively upon her pallid face,
While the sweet songster o'er the oaken door
Looks through his grate and warbles 'weep no more!'"

"lovely in her misery,
As jewel sparkling up through the dark sea."

"*Where hung the fiery moon and stars of blood,*
And phantom ships rolled on the rolling flood."

"My mind by grief was ripened ere its time,
And knowledge came spontaneous as a chime
That flows into the soul, unbid, unsought;
On Earth and Air and Heaven I fed my thought —
On Ocean's teachings — *Ætna's lava tears.* —
Ruins and wrecks and nameless sepulchres."

"Each morning brought to them untasted bliss.
No pangs — no sorrows came with varying years —
No cold distrust — no faithlessness — no tears."

"*But hand in hand as Eve and Adam trod*
Eden, they walked beneath the smile of God."

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It will be understood, of course, that we quote these brief passages by no means as *the best*, or even as particularly excelling the rest of the poem, on an averaged estimate of merit, but simply with a view of exemplifying some of the author's more obvious traits — those, especially, of vigorous rhythm, and forcible expression. In no case can the loftier qualities of a truly great poem be conveyed through the citation of its component portions, in detail, even when long extracts are given — how much less, then, by such mere *points* as we have selected.

"The Broken Heart" (included with "The Child of the Sea") is even more characteristic of Mrs. Lewis than that very remarkable poem. It is more enthusiastic, more glowing, more passionate, and perhaps more abundant in that peculiar spirit of abandon which has rendered Mrs. Maria Brooks's "Zophiel" so great a favorite with the critics. "The Child of the Sea" is, of course, by far the more elaborate and more artistic composition, and excels "The Broken Heart" in most of those high qualities which immortalize a work of art. Its narrative, also, is more ably conducted and more replete with incident; but to the delicate fancy or the bold imagination of a poet, there is an inexpressible charm in the latter.

The minor poems embraced in the volume published by Mr. Putnam, evince a very decided advance in *skill* made by their author since the issue of "The Records of the Heart." A nobler poem than "La Vega" could not be easily pointed out. Its fierce energy of expression will arrest attention very especially; but its general glow and vigor have rarely been equalled.

Among the author's less elaborate compositions,

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however, "The Angel's Visit," written since the publication of her "Child of the Sea," is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best, although "The Forsaken" and "La Vega" are scarcely, if at all, inferior.

In summing up the authorial merits of Mrs. Lewis, all critical opinion must agree in assigning her a high if not the very highest rank among the poetesses of her land. Her artistic ability is unusual; her command of language great; her acquirements numerous and thorough; her range of incident wide; her invention, generally, vigorous; her fancy exuberant; and her imagination — that primary and most indispensable of all poetic requisites — richer, perhaps, than any of her female contemporaries. But as yet — her friends sincerely believe — she has given merely an earnest of her powers.

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III

A CHAPTER OF SUGGESTIONS

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A CHAPTER OF SUGGESTIONS

IN the life of every man there occurs at least one epoch when the spirit seems to abandon, for a brief period, the body, and, elevating itself above mortal affairs just so far as to get a comprehensive and *general* view makes thus an estimate of its humanity, as accurate as is possible, under any circumstances, to that particular spirit. The soul here separates itself from its own idiosyncrasy, or individuality, and considers its own being, not as appertaining solely to itself, but as a portion of the universal Ens. All the important good resolutions which we keep — all startling, marked regenerations of character — are brought about at these *crises* of life. And thus it is our *sense of self* which debases and which keeps us debased.

The theory of chance, or, as the mathematicians term it, the Calculus of Probabilities, has this remarkable peculiarity, that its truth in general is in direct proportion with its fallacy in particular.

We may judge of the degree of abstraction in one who meditates, by the manner in which he receives an interruption. If he is much startled, his revery was not profound; and the converse. Thus the affectation of the tribe of pretended mental-absentees, be-

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comes transparent. These people awake from their musings with a start, and an air of bewilderment, as men naturally awake from dreams that have a close semblance of reality. But they are, clearly, ignorant that the phenomena of dreaming differ, radically, from those of revery — of which latter the mesmeric condition is the extreme.

There are few thinkers who will not be surprised to find, upon retrospect of the world of thought, how *very* frequently the first, or intuitive, impressions have been the true ones. A poem, for example, enraptures us in our childhood. In adolescence, we perceive it to be full of fault. In the first years of manhood, we utterly despise and condemn it; and it is not until mature age has given tone to our feelings, enlarged our knowledge, and perfected our understanding, that we recur to our original sentiment and primitive admiration, with the additional pleasure which is always deduced from knowing *how* it was that we once were pleased, and *why* it is that we still admire.

That the imagination has not been unjustly ranked as supreme among the mental faculties, appears from the intense consciousness on the part of the imaginative man, that the faculty in question brings his soul often to a glimpse of things supernal and eternal to the very verge of the *great secrets*. There are moments, indeed, in which he perceives the faint perfumes, and hears the melodies of a happier world. Some of the most profound knowledge — perhaps all *very* profound knowledge — has originated from a highly stimulated imagination. Great intellects *guess* well. The laws of Kepler were, professedly, *guesses*.

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An excellent magazine paper might be written upon the subject of the progressive steps by which any great work of art — especially of literary art — attained completion. How vast a dissimilarity always exists between the germ and the fruit — between the work and its original conception! Sometimes the original conception is abandoned, or left out of sight altogether. Most authors sit down to write with no fixed design, trusting to the inspiration of the moment; it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that most books are valueless. Pen should never touch paper until, at least, a well-digested *general* purpose be established. In fiction, the *dénouement* — in all other composition the intended *effect*, should be definitely considered and arranged, before writing the first word; and no word should be then written which does not tend or form a part of a sentence which tends to the development of the *dénouement*, or to the strengthening of the effect. Where *plot* forms a portion of the contemplated interest, too much preconsideration cannot be had. *Plot* is very imperfectly understood, and has never been rightly defined. Many persons regard it as mere complexity of incident. In its most rigorous acceptation, it is *that from which no component atom can be removed, and in which none of the component atoms can be displaced, without ruin to the whole;* and although a sufficiently good plot may be constructed, without attention to the whole rigor of this definition, still it is the definition which the true artist should always keep in view, and always endeavor to consummate in his works. Some authors appear, however, to be totally deficient in constructiveness, and thus, even with plentiful invention, fail signally in plot. Dickens belongs to this class. His

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"Barnaby Rudge" shows not the least ability to *adapt*. Godwin and Bulwer are the best constructors of plot in English literature. The former has left a preface to his "Caleb Williams," in which he says that the novel was *written backwards;* the author first completing the second volume, in which the hero is involved in a maze of difficulties, and then casting about him for sufficiently probable cause of these difficulties, out of which to concoct volume the first. This mode cannot surely be recommended, but evinces the idiosyncrasy of Godwin's mind. Bulwer's "Pompeii" is an instance of admirably managed plot. His "Night and Morning" sacrifices to *mere* plot interests of far higher value.

All men of genius have their detractors; but it is merely a *non distributio medii* to argue, thence, that all men who have their detractors are men of genius. Yet, undoubtedly, of all despicable things, your habitual sneerer at real greatness is the most despicable. What names excite, in mankind, the most unspeakable — the most insufferable disgust? The Dennises — the Frérons — the Desfontaines. Their littleness is measured by the greatness of those whom they have reviled. And yet, in the face of this well-known and natural principle, there will always exist a set of *homunculi*, eager to grow notorious by the pertinacity of their yelpings at the heels of the distinguished. And this eagerness arises, less frequently from inability to appreciate genius, than from a species of cat-and-dog antipathy to it, which no suggestions of worldly prudence are adequate to quell.

That intuitive and seemingly casual perception by which we often attain knowledge, when reason herself

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falters and abandons the effort, appears to resemble the sudden glancing at a star, by which we see it more clearly than by a direct gaze; or the half-closing the eyes in looking at a plot of grass the more fully to appreciate the intensity of its green.

There are few men of that peculiar sensibility which is at the root of genius, who, in early youth, have not expended much of their mental energy in *living too fast;* and, in later years, comes the unconquerable desire to goad the imagination up to that point which it would have attained in an ordinary, normal, or well-regulated life. The earnest longing for artificial excitement, which, unhappily, has characterized too many eminent men, may thus be regarded as a psychal want, or necessity — an effort to regain the lost — a struggle of the soul to assume the position which, under other circumstances, would have been its due.

The great variety of melodious expression which is given out from the keys of a piano, might be made, in proper hands, the basis of an excellent fairy-tale. Let the poet press his finger steadily upon each key, keeping it down, and imagine each prolonged series of undulations the history, of joy or of sorrow, related by a good or evil spirit imprisoned within. There are some of the notes which almost tell, of their own accord, true and intelligible histories.

A precise or *clear* man, in conversation or in composition, has a very important consequential advantage — more especially in matters of logic. As he proceeds with his argument, the person addressed, exactly comprehending, for that reason, and often for that reason only, agrees. Few minds, in fact, can immediately

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perceive the distinction between the comprehension of a proposition and an agreement of the reason with the thing proposed. Pleased at comprehending, we often are so excited as to take it for granted that we assent. Luminous writers may thus indulge, for a long time, in pure sophistry, without being detected. Macaulay is a remarkable instance of this species of mystification. We coincide with what he says, too frequently, because we so very distinctly understand what it is that he intends to say. His essay on Bacon has been long and deservedly admired; but its concluding portions (wherein he endeavors to depreciate the *Novum Organum*), although logical *to a fault*, are irrational in the extreme. But not to confine myself to mere assertion. Let us refer to this great essayist's review of Ranke's "History of the Popes." His strength is here put forth to account for the progress of Romanism, by maintaining that divinity is not a progressive science. "The enigmas," says he, in substance, "which perplex the natural theologian, are the same in all ages, while the Bible, where alone we are to seek revealed truth, has been always what it is." Here Mr. Macaulay confounds the nature of that proof from which we reason of the concerns of earth, considered as man's habitation, with the nature of that evidence from which we reason of the same earth, regarded as a unit of the universe. In the former case, the *data* being palpable, the proof is direct; in the latter it is purely *analogical*. Were the indications we derive from science, of the nature and designs of Deity, and thence, by inference, of man's destiny — were these indications proof *direct*, it is then very true that no advance in science could strengthen them; for, as the essayist justly observes, "Nothing

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can be added to the force of the argument which the mind finds in every beast, bird, or flower;" but, since these indications are rigidly analogical, every step in human knowledge, every astronomical discovery, in especial, throws additional light upon the august subject, *by extending the range of analogy.* That we know no more, to-day, of the nature of Deity, of its purposes, and thus of man himself, than we did even a dozen years ago, is a proposition disgracefully absurd. "If Natural Philosophy," says a greater than Macaulay, "should continue to be improved in its various branches, the bounds of moral philosophy would be enlarged also." These words of the prophetic Newton are felt to be true, and will be fulfilled.

It is observable that, while among all nations the omni-color, white, has been received as an emblem of the pure, the no-color, black, has by no means been generally admitted as *sufficiently* typical of impurity. There are blue devils as well as black; and when we think *very* ill of a woman, and wish to *blacken* her character, we merely call her "a *blue*-stocking," and advise her to read, in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, the chapter "*de ce qui est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu.*" There is far more difference between these "*couleurs*," in fact, than that which exists between simple *black* and white. Your "blue," when we come to talk of stockings, is black in *issimo* — "*nigrum nigrius nigro*" — like the matter from which Raymond Lully first manufactured his alcohol.

Mr. ——, I perceive, has been appointed Librarian to the new —— Athenæum. To him, the appointment is advantageous in many respects. Especially: —

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"*Mon cousin, voici une belle occasion pour apprendre à lire!*"

As far as I can understand the "loving our enemies," it implies the hating our friends.

In commencing our dinners with gravy soup, no doubt we have taken a hint from Horace —

"—— Da," he says, "si *grave* non est,
Quæ prima iratum ventrem placaverit esca."

Of much of our cottage architecture we may safely say, I think (admitting the good intention), that it *would* have been Gothic if it had not felt it its duty to be Dutch.

James's multitudinous novels seem to be written upon the plan of "the songs of the Bard of Schiraz," in which, we are assured by Fadladeen, "the same beautiful thought occurs again and again in every possible variety of phrase."

Some of our foreign lions resemble the human brain in one very striking particular. They are without any sense themselves, and yet are the centres of sensation.

Mirabeau, I fancy, acquired his wonderful tact at foreseeing and meeting *contingencies*, during his residence in the stronghold of *If*.

Cottle's "Reminiscences of Coleridge" is just such a book as damns its perpetrator forever in the opinion of every gentleman who reads it. More and more every day do we moderns *pavoneggiarsi* about our Christianity; yet, so far as the *spirit* of Christianity is concerned, we are immeasurably behind the ancients.

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Mottoes and proverbs are the indices of national character; and the Anglo-Saxons are disgraced in having no proverbial equivalent to the "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*" Moreover — where, in all statutory Christendom, shall we find a *law* so Christian as the "*Defuncti injuriâ ne afficiantur*" of the Twelve Tables? The simple *negative* injunction of the Latin law and proverb — the injunction *not to do ill* to the dead — seems, at a first glance, scarcely susceptible of improvement in the delicate respect of its terms. I cannot help thinking, however, that the sentiment, if not the idea intended, is more forcibly conveyed in an apothegm by one of the old English moralists, James Puckle. By an ingenious figure of speech he contrives to imbue the negation of the Roman command with a spirit of active and positive beneficence. "When speaking of the dead," he says, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," "*so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence.*"

I have no doubt that the Fourierites honestly fancy "a nasty poet fit for nothing" to be the true translation of "*poeta nascitur non fit.*"

There surely can*not* be "more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of" (oh, Andrew Jackson Davis!) "in *your* philosophy."

"It is only as the Bird of Paradise quits us in taking wing," observes, or should observe, some poet, "that we obtain a full view of the beauty of its plumage;" and it is only as the politician is about being "turned out" that — like the snake of the Irish Chronicle

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when touched by Saint Patrick — he "awakens to a sense of his *situation*."

Newspaper editors seem to have constitutions closely similar to those of the Deities in Valhalla, who cut each other to pieces every day, and yet get up perfectly sound and fresh every morning.

As far as I can comprehend the modern cant in favor of "unadulterated Saxon," it is fast leading us to the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English."

The frightfully long money-pouches — "like the Cucumber called the Gigantic" — which have come in vogue among our belles — are *not* of Parisian origin, as many suppose, but are strictly indigenous here. The fact is, such a fashion would be quite out of place in Paris, where it is money *only* that women keep in a purse. The purse of an American lady, however, must be large enough to carry both her money and the soul of its owner.

I can see no objection to gentlemen "standing for Congress" — provided they stand on one side — nor to their "running for Congress" — if they are in a very great hurry to get there — but it would be a blessing if some of them could be persuaded into sitting still for Congress, after they arrive.

If Envy, as Cyprian has it, be "the moth of the soul," whether shall we regard Content as its Scotch snuff or its camphor?

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"*Con tal que las costumbres de un autor sean puras y castas*," says the Catholic Don Tomas de las Torres, in the preface to his "Amatory Poems," "*importa muy poco que no sean igualmente severas sus obras:*" meaning, in plain English, that, provided the personal morals of an author are pure, it matters little what those of his books are.

For so unprincipled an idea, Don Tomas, no doubt, is still having a hard time of it in Purgatory; and, by way of most pointedly manifesting their disgust at his philosophy on the topic in question, many modern theologians and divines are now busily squaring their conduct by his proposition exactly *conversed*.

Children are never too tender to be whipped:— like tough beef-steaks, the more you beat them the more tender they become.

Lucian, in describing the statue "with its surface of Parian marble and its interior filled with rags," must have been looking with a prophetic eye at some of our great "moneyed institutions."

That poets (using the word comprehensively, as including artists in general) are a *genus irritabile*, is well understood; but the *why*, seems not to be commonly seen. An artist *is* an artist only by dint of his exquisite sense of Beauty — a sense affording him rapturous enjoyment, but at the same time implying, or involving, an equally exquisite sense of Deformity of disproportion. Thus a wrong — an injustice — done a poet who is really a poet, excites him to a degree which, to ordinary apprehension, appears disproportionate with the wrong. Poets *see* injustice —

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never where it does not exist — but very often where the unpoetical see no injustice whatever. Thus the poetical irritability has no reference to "temper" in the vulgar sense, but merely to a more than usual clear-sightedness in respect to wrong: — this clear-sightedness being nothing more than a corollary from the vivid perception of right — of justice — of proportion — in a word, of τὸ καλόν. But one thing is clear — that the man who is *not* "irritable" (to the ordinary apprehension), is *no poet*.

Let a man succeed ever so evidently, ever so demonstrably, in many different displays of *genius*, the envy of criticism will agree with the popular voice in denying him more than *talent* in any. Thus a poet who has achieved a great (by which I mean an effective) poem, should be cautious not to distinguish himself in any other walk of Letters. In especial — let him make no effort in Science — unless anonymously, or with the view of waiting patiently the judgment of posterity. Because universal or even versatile geniuses have rarely or never been known — *therefore*, thinks the world, none such can ever be. A "therefore" of this kind is, with the world, conclusive. But what is the *fact*, as taught us by analysis of mental power? Simply, that the *highest* genius — that the genius which all men instantaneously acknowledge as such, which acts upon individuals, as well as upon the mass, by a species of magnetism incomprehensible but irresistible and never resisted — that this genius which demonstrates itself in the simplest gesture, or even by the absence of all — this genius which speaks without a voice and flashes from the unopened eye — is but the result of generally large

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mental power existing in a state of *absolute proportion*, so that no one faculty has undue predominance. That factitious "genius" — that "genius" in the popular sense, which is but the manifestation of the abnormal predominance of some one faculty over all the others, and, of course, at the expense and to the detriment of all the others — is a result of mental disease, or rather of organic malformation of mind: — it is this and nothing more. Not only will such "genius" fail, if turned aside from the path indicated by its predominant faculty; but, even when pursuing this path — when producing those works in which, certainly, it is *best* calculated to succeed — will give unmistakable indications of *unsoundness*, in respect to general intellect. Hence, indeed, arises the just idea that

"Great wit to madness nearly is allied."

I say "*just* idea;" for by "great wit," in this case, the poet intends precisely the pseudo-genius to which I refer. The true genius, on the other hand, is necessarily, if not universal in its manifestations, at least capable of universality; and if, attempting all things, it succeeds in one rather better than in another, this is merely on account of a certain bias by which Taste leads it with more earnestness in the one direction than in the other. With equal zeal, it would succeed equally in all.

To sum up our results in respect to this very simple, but much *vexata quæstio*: —

What the world calls "genius" is the state of mental disease arising from the undue predominance of some one of the faculties. The works of such genius are never sound in themselves, and, in especial, always betray the general mental insanity.

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The proportion of the mental faculties, in a case where the general mental power is not inordinate, gives that result which we distinguish as *talent:*— and the talent is greater or less, first, as the general mental power is greater or less; and, secondly, as the proportion of the faculties is more or less absolute.

The proportion of the faculties, in a case where the mental power is inordinately great, gives that result which *is* the true *genius* (but which, on account of the proportion and seeming simplicity of its works, is seldom acknowledged to *be* so); and the genius is greater or less, first, as the general mental power is more or less inordinately great; and, secondly, as the proportion of the faculties is more or less absolute.

An objection will be made: — that the greatest excess of mental power, however proportionate, does not seem to satisfy our idea of genius, unless we have, in addition, sensibility, passion, energy. The reply is, that the "absolute proportion" spoken of, when applied to inordinate mental power, gives, as a result, the appreciation of Beauty and horror of Deformity which we call sensibility, together with that intense vitality, which is implied when we speak of "Energy" or "Passion."

"And Beauty draws us by a single hair."

Capillary attraction, of course.

It is by no means clear, as regards the present revolutionary spirit of Europe, that it is a spirit which "moveth altogether if it move at all." In Great Britain it may be kept quiet for half a century yet,

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by placing at the head of affairs an experienced medical man. He should keep his forefinger constantly on the pulse of the patient, and exhibit *panem* in gentle doses, with as much *circenses* as the stomach can be made to retain.

The taste manifested by our Transcendental poets *is* to be treated "reverentially," beyond doubt, as one of Mr. Emerson's friends suggests — for the fact is, it is Taste on her death-bed — Taste kicking *in articulo mortis*.

I should not say, of Taglioni, exactly that she dances, but that she laughs with her arms and legs, and that if she takes vengeance on her present oppressors, she will be amply justified by the *lex Talionis*.

The world is infested, just now, by a new sect of philosophers, who have not yet suspected themselves of forming a sect, and who, consequently, have adopted no name. They are the *Believers in everything Odd*. Their High Priest, in the East, is Charles Fourier — in the West, Horace Greeley; and high priests they are to some purpose. The only common bond among the sect is Credulity: — let us call it Insanity at once, and be done with it. Ask any one of them *why* he believes this or that, and, if he be conscientious (ignorant people usually are), he will make you very much such a reply as Talleyrand made when asked why he believed in the Bible. "I believe in it first," said he, "because I am Bishop of Autun; and secondly, *because I know nothing about it at all*." What these philosophers call "argument," is a way they have "*de nier ce qui est et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas*."

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The ingenuity of critical malice would often be laughable but for the disgust which, even in the most perverted spirits, injustice never fails to excite. A common *trick* is that of decrying, impliedly, the higher by insisting upon the lower merits of an author. Macaulay, for example, deeply feeling how much critical acumen is enforced by cautious attention to the mere "rhetoric" which is its vehicle, has at length become the best of modern rhetoricians. His *brother* reviewers — anonymous, of course, and likely to remain so forever — extol "the acumen of Carlyle, the analysis of Schlegel, *and* the style of Macaulay." Bancroft is a philosophical historian; but no amount of philosophy has yet taught him to despise a minute accuracy in point of fact. His *brother* historians talk of "the grace of Prescott, the erudition of Gibbon, *and* the painstaking precision of Bancroft." Tennyson, perceiving how vividly an imaginative effect is aided, now and then, by a certain quaintness judiciously introduced, brings this latter, at times, in support of his most glorious and most delicate imagination: — whereupon his *brother* poets hasten to laud the imagination of Mr. Somebody, whom nobody imagined to have any, "*and* the somewhat affected quaintness of Tennyson." Let the noblest poet add to his other excellences, if he dares, that of faultless versification and scrupulous attention to grammar — he is damned at once. His rivals have it in their power to discourse of "A. the true poet, *and* B. the versifier and disciple of Lindley Murray."

The goddess Laverna, who is a head without a body, could not do better, perhaps, than make advances to "*La Jeune France*," which, for some

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years to come, at least, must otherwise remain a body without a head.

H—— calls his verse a "poem," very much as Francis the First bestowed the title, *mes déserts*, upon his snug little deer-park at Fontainebleau.

Mr. A —— is frequently spoken of as "one of our most industrious writers;" and, in fact, when we consider how much he has written, we perceive, at once, that he *must* have been industrious, or he could never (like an honest woman as he is) have so thoroughly succeeded in keeping himself from being "talked about."

That a cause leads to an effect, is scarcely more certain than that, so far as Morals are concerned, a repetition of effect tends to the generation of cause. Herein lies the principle of what we so vaguely term 'Habit."

With the exception of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," I have never read a poem combining so much of the fiercest passion with so much of the most delicate imagination, as the "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" of Miss Barrett. I am forced to admit, however, that the latter work *is* a palpable imitation of the former, which it surpasses in thesis, as much as it falls below it in a certain calm energy, lustrous and indomitable — such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold.

What has become of the inferior planet which Decuppis, about nine years ago, declared he saw traversing the disk of the sun?

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"Ignorance *is* bliss" — but, that the bliss be real, the ignorance must be so profound as not to suspect itself ignorant. With this understanding, Boileau's line may be read thus:

"Le plus fou *toujours* est le plus satisfait,"

— "*toujours*" in place of "*souvent*."

Bryant and Street are both, essentially, descriptive poets; and descriptive poetry, even in its happiest manifestation, is *not* of the highest order. But the distinction between Bryant and Street is very broad. While the former, in reproducing the sensible images of Nature, reproduces the sentiments with which he regards them, the latter gives us the images and nothing beyond. He never forces us to feel what we feel he must have felt.

In lauding Beauty, Genius merely evinces a filial affection. To Genius Beauty gives life — reaping often a reward in Immortality.

And this is the "American Drama" of ——! Well! — that "Conscience which makes cowards of us all" will permit me to say, in praise of the performance, only that it is not quite so bad as I expected it to be. But then I always expect too much.

What we feel to be *Fancy* will be found fanciful still, whatever be the theme which engages it. No *subject* exalts it into Imagination. When Moore is termed "a fanciful poet," the epithet is applied with precision. He *is*. He is fanciful in "Lalla Rookh," and had he written the "Inferno," in the "Inferno" he would have contrived to be still fanciful and nothing beyond.

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When we speak of "a suspicious man," we may mean either one who suspects, or one to be suspected. Our language needs either the adjective "suspectful" or the adjective "suspectable."

"To love," says Spenser, "is

> "To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To speed, to give, to want, to be undone."

The philosophy, here, might be rendered more profound by the mere omission of a comma. We all know the *willing* blindness — the *voluntary* madness of Love. We express this in thus punctuating the last line: —

> "To speed, to give — *to want to be undone.*"

It is a case, in short, where we gain a point by omitting it.

Miss Edgeworth seems to have had only an approximate comprehension of "Fashion," for she says: "If it was the fashion to burn me, and I at the stake, I hardly know ten persons of my acquaintance who would refuse to throw on a fagot." There are *many* who, in such a case, would "refuse to throw on a fagot" — for fear of smothering out the fire.

I am beginning to think with Horsely — that "the People have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them."

It is only to teach his children Geography, that G —— wears a boot, the picture of Italy upon the map.

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In his great Dictionary, Webster seems to have had an idea of being more English than the English — "*plus Arabe qu'en Arabie.*"

That there were once "seven wise men" is by no means, strictly speaking, an historical *fact;* and I am rather inclined to rank the idea among the Kabbala.

Painting their faces to look like Macaulay, some of our critics manage to resemble him, at length, as a Massaccian does a Raffaellian Virgin; and, except that the former is feebler and thinner than the other — suggesting the idea of its being the ghost of the other — not one connoisseur in ten can perceive any difference. But then, unhappily, even the street lazzaroni can feel the distinction.

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NOTES

THE LITERATI

THE LITERATI. Published in "Godey's Lady's Book," May–October, 1846. The text is that of Griswold, which varies from the original issue only in consequence of slight editorial revision in the main, but very materially in the cases of Briggs, English, Mrs. Osgood, and Mrs. Hewitt. Poe had previously reviewed Mrs. Osgood at length in the "Broadway Journal," ii. 23, and in "Godey's," March, 1846, and also Mrs. Hewitt in the "Broadway Journal," ii. 16, and in "Godey's," February, 1846; the Griswold text embodies these with the later notices of "The Literati," and it is presumed that, in these instances, and also in those of Briggs and English, the Editor followed a later manuscript of Poe.

Of the other authors treated, several had been previously reviewed, as follows: —

N. P. WILLIS. The note, p. 14, is from the "Broadway Journal," i. 3. See also "The American Drama," vol. vi.

MRS. MOWATT. "Broadway Journal," i. 14.

RALPH HOYT. "Broadway Journal," ii. 3.

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK. "Southern Literary Messenger," April, 1836; "Graham's Magazine," September, 1843.

MRS. CHILD. "Broadway Journal," i. 22.

MRS. SEDGWICK. "Southern Literary Messenger," December, 1835.

RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE. Compare Poe's note on "Hans Pfaall."

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Some of the authors had come under Poe's criticism elsewhere, but only in minor or incidental ways, as in the papers on "Autography," or unimportant book-notices.

The publication of these articles in "Godey's" occasioned some protest, and in reply to such comment the Editor published the following in the "Editor's Book Table," in the number for June, 1846:—

"THE AUTHORS AND MR. POE. We have received several letters from New York, anonymous, and from personal friends, requesting us to be careful what we allow Mr. Poe to say of the New York authors, many of whom are our personal friends. We reply to one and all that we have nothing to do but publish Mr. Poe's opinion, *not our own*. Whether we agree with Mr. Poe or not is another matter. We are not to be intimidated by a threat of the loss of friends, or turned from our purpose by honeyed words. Our course is onward. The May edition was exhausted before the first of May, and we have had orders for hundreds from Boston and New York, which we could not supply. The first number of the series (with autographs) is republished in this number, which also contains No. 2. The usual quantity of reading matter is given in addition to the notices.

"Many attempts have been made and are making by various persons to forestall public opinion. We have the name of one person. Others are busy with reports of Mr. Poe's illness. Mr. Poe has been ill, but we have letters from him of very recent dates; also a new batch of the *Literati*, which show anything but feebleness either of body or mind. Almost every paper that we exchange with has praised our new enterprise — the Union — and spoken in high terms of No. 1 of Mr. Poe's opinions."

The series, together with the main body of Poe's criticism, was included in Griswold's third volume, separately issued, and was widely reviewed by the press, and as a rule unfavorably, in consequence of the personalities in many of the papers.

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MINOR CONTEMPORARIES

R. W. GRISWOLD AND THE POETS. Published in the "Boston Miscellany," November, 1842.

RUFUS DAWES. Published in "Graham's Magazine," October, 1842.

FLACCUS — THOMAS WARD. Published in "Graham's Magazine," March, 1843, under the title "Our Amateur Poets, No. 1."

WILLIAM W. LORD. Published in the "Broadway Journal," i. 21.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING. Published in "Graham's Magazine," August, 1843, under the title "Our Amateur Poets, No. 3." Mr. Channing was the nephew of Dr. Channing.

CORNELIUS MATHEWS. Published in "Graham's Magazine," February, 1842. This author was noticed also by Poe elsewhere from time to time, for example, in "Godey's Lady's Book," November, 1845, but the reviews are unimportant.

HENRY B. HIRST. Unknown. The text follows Griswold. This author was more favorably noticed in the "Broadway Journal," ii. 1, and the later review, here printed, represents a further stage in the personal relations of the two men.

SEBA SMITH. Published in "Graham's Magazine," July, 1841.

L. A. WILMER. Published in "Graham's Magazine," August, 1841.

J. G. C. BRAINARD. Published in "Graham's Magazine," February, 1842.

GEORGE P. MORRIS. Published in the "Southern Literary Messenger," April, 1849, and slightly revised from the earlier publication in "Burton's Gentleman's Magazine," December, 1839.

BAYARD TAYLOR. Published in the "Southern Literary Messenger," April, 1849.

WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE. Unknown. The text follows Griswold.

MRS. ELLET. Unknown. The text follows Griswold.

MRS. WELBY. Published in the "Democratic Review," December, 1844.

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THE DAVIDSONS. Published in "Graham's Magazine," August, December, 1841. The text follows Griswold, who reproduces a somewhat revised form.

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH. Published in "Godey's Lady's Book," December, 1845. Poe had previously reviewed this author in the "Broadway Journal," ii. 7.

ESTELLE ANNA LEWIS. Published in the "Southern Literary Messenger," September, 1848.

A CHAPTER OF SUGGESTIONS

A Chapter of Suggestions. Published in "The Opal," 1845, and (the second part) in "Graham's Magazine," May, June, 1849.

G. E. W.

END OF VOL. VIII.

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